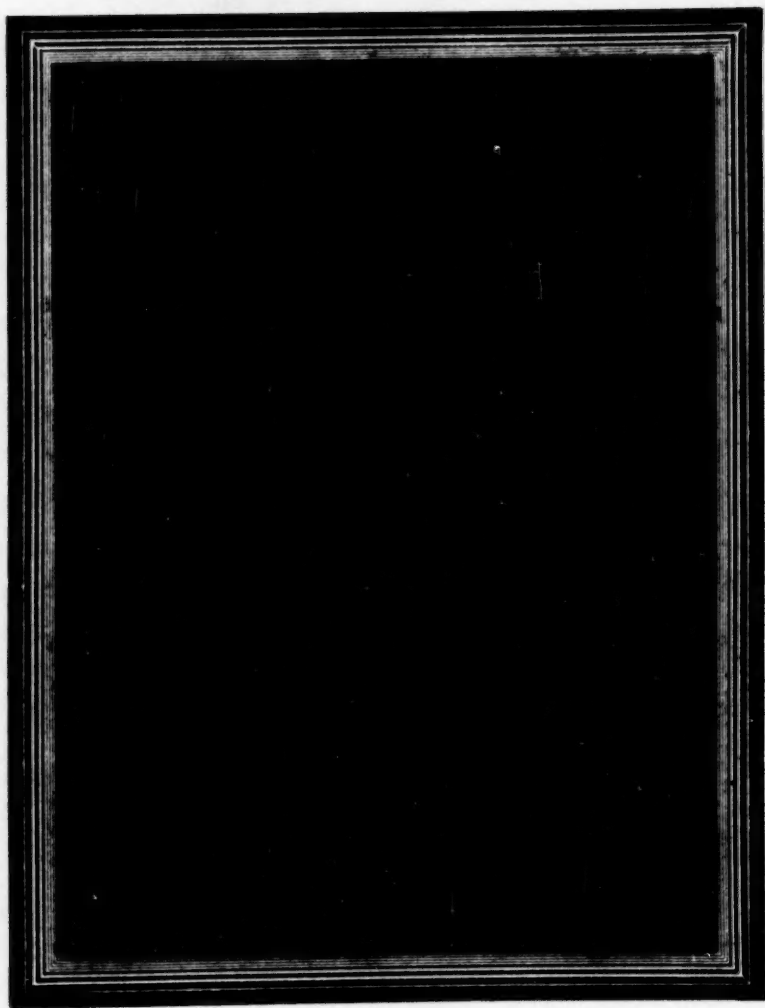


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# THE ENGLISH CATHOLICS 1850 - 1950

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*Edited by*

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Malady of the Age : A Fanaticized Consciousness . . . . .	I
By Gabriel Marcel (Translated by A. Gordon Smith)	
 The Philosophy of Fiction . . . . .	 13
By T. S. Gregory	
 The Situation in Moral Philosophy . . . . .	 31
By Vincent Turner, S.J.	
 Is Integrity Enough? : A Study of George Orwell . . . . .	 49
By T. A. Birrell	
 The Three Circles . . . . .	 66
By Wilhelm Schenk	
 European Thought and the Unity of Europe . . . . .	 82
By Julián Marías (Translated by T. E. May)	
 Emmanuel Mounier . . . . .	 98
By Eugene Langdale	

## Book Reviews

<i>La Doctrine Economique et Sociale de Karl Marx</i> , by J. M. Cameron	101
<i>The Spaniards in their History</i> , by A. A. Parker . . . . .	103
<i>Christianity and Civilization</i> , by T. S. Gregory . . . . .	107
<i>The Nature of the Universe</i> , by J. A. Teegan . . . . .	113
<i>Introduction to Kierkegaard</i> , by E. I. Watkin . . . . .	116
<i>Poetry and Humanism</i> , by W. W. Robson . . . . .	117
<i>Œuvres Complètes</i> of Montesquieu; <i>Un Carnet inédit: Le Spicilège</i> ; and <i>Œuvre Critique</i> , by J. P. Mayer . . . . .	120
<i>The Sequence of Mediaeval English Art</i> , by Gervase Mathew . . . . .	127
<i>Erasmus, Tyndale and More</i> , by A. W. Reed . . . . .	128
<i>Desert Calling</i> , by Frank Macmillan . . . . .	131
Italian Reviews, by E. W. Ashcroft . . . . .	133
French and German Reviews, by Edward Quinn . . . . .	136

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# THE MALADY OF THE AGE: A FANATICIZED CONSCIOUSNESS

*By* GABRIEL MARCEL

THERE is no occasion to explain in detail, the motives are too obvious, why I have chosen to write on the subject of fanaticism. We are literally encircled by it. And it is not only Stalinist fanaticism I have in mind. Look at Tito: clearly the anti-Stalin communists are fanatical too. Even that is not all: in Germany and Austria we have a revival of Nazism, so very reliable witnesses inform us. And we must add, to be perfectly honest, that certain religions, even those with principles unimpeachably genuine, are capable (so to speak) of 'fanaticizing' themselves; just as tissue, originally healthy, may easily turn cancerous.

Why the title 'A Fanaticized Consciousness' and not just 'Fanaticism'? Because words ending in 'ism' are better avoided whenever possible: they are usually a symptom of some improper process of thought. What we are concerned with is a particular condition of consciousness; or better, perhaps, one of its modes of existence. We see clearly today that until our own age, consciousness has been nearly always inadequately represented, even inadequately conceived. I am thinking of Kant, more especially, and a section of his descendants: not so much the Hegelians, but those of the French and German neo-critical schools. It used to be thought possible to reduce consciousness to a particular act of consciousness, an act there was no qualifying and therefore no altering. In this way what may be called transcendental philosophy tended to be utterly divorced from concrete experience, more particularly psycho-pathological experience, though the latter must have its roots in so-called normal experience. It is only very recently that medical observation has led us to speak

of a morbid consciousness. But in philosophy, we must hasten to add, some of the profoundest thinkers—perhaps even Husserl, certainly some of his successors—have arrived at conclusions which approach very near to those of the clinical physician. There is no need to insist on this point, which would carry us too far astray; but in treating of the fanaticized consciousness I propose to begin with a brief phenomenological analysis; I am therefore bound to explain what from my point of view (but by no means exclusively mine) is to be understood by the term ‘phenomenological analysis’.

It will be remembered that Husserl, following Brentano—and, for that matter, developing certain mediaeval ideas—revealed conclusively the *intentional* character of consciousness. Consciousness, that means to say, is essentially consciousness *of*, or (rather more precisely) consciousness *towards*. It reaches out to a reality from which it can be separated only by a vicious abstraction. Next I shall have to show what alteration takes place in the intentionality that is allied to the fanaticized consciousness. This alteration, it is important to realize, is not exclusively subjective: properly speaking, it is not an alteration of a state, but of the way consciousness is related to something other than itself. This other thing must be taken into account; certainly not ignored, in the manner of the old psychology, concerned as that was wholly with states of consciousness.

Having proceeded to this analysis, which can be no more than a sketch, I shall inquire why it is that this kind of disease always tends to be epidemic; at the same time I shall try to indicate very briefly the prophylactic measures it may be possible to adopt, particularly in the sphere of education. But here I shall inevitably encroach on the domain of the religious and metaphysical, so I must apologize in advance if I unwittingly shock the dogmatically-minded. On the other hand, I may say at once that there will be no justification for interpreting this essay in a sense favourable to scepticism. Scepticism also undoubtedly conflicts with the structural conditions of consciousness. It is more than doubtful if it can confer the least immunity on the person addicted to it, and there is even reason to fear that, by means of a particular dialectic, it may itself in the long run terminate in fanaticism.

The first point that strikes us is that the fanatic can never possibly appear fanatical to himself. It is only the unfanatical that

can recognize the fanatic; the consequence is that, when he is so judged or accused, the fanatic can always claim to be misunderstood or maligned.

This may be disquieting to the honest inquirer, trying to investigate the nature of the fanaticized consciousness. He may even be tempted to ask himself whether such an accusation on the part of the unfanatical is not merely a subjective and emotional reaction. But though at the outset it may not be possible to remove this objection, the later stages of our inquiry will enable us to do so.

What conditions must be present, before we can say of anyone: that man's a fanatic? Or, to be more exact, what is the power that renders him fanatical, and where is it situated? At first sight one is tempted to say it is an *idea* that gives rise to fanaticism, and there is a certain amount of truth in it. But the statement needs qualifying. To begin with, an idea that can assume the character and force of an obsession does not necessarily make a fanatic. Take, for example, Balhasar Claes in Balzac's *Recherche de l'Absolu*: he might be considered to be the victim of an obsession, he might even be considered mad, but he was certainly not a fanatic. Offhand, one is inclined to say that fanaticism is essentially religious; and this again, I think, is both true and false: true, from the point of view of an objective description of religion; yet fundamentally false, because in the sphere of religion any objective description must essentially distort the reality to which it is applied; or, more exactly, because it tends to exclude, and deprive of all significance, the fundamental distinction between true and false religion. A true religion, it will be found, is incapable of making fanatics; and inversely, wherever there is an influence that makes for fanaticism there is also a radical perversion of religion.

But in that case what made us say that, from the point of view of objective description, fanaticism is something of the religious order? The answer is, because the fanatic cannot exist in isolation; on the contrary, he is one among others; between others and himself there comes into being what one is tempted to describe as an 'agglutination', but I should prefer to call it a unity or identity of *pitch*. This unity or identity has a kind of exalting effect on those who share it, and everything seems to show that the fanaticism of one is continually rekindled as it comes into contact with the fanaticism of another. One might add that it is always centred in the ultra-intense consciousness of a 'we'.

But there is more to it than this. In most cases, at least, it would appear to be centred not in an idea, considered in itself in its abstract characteristics, but in a single personal focus, which performs, as it were, the function of a vector. The disappearance of such a vector may have a critical effect on the minds of the fanaticized. Moreover there are several different cases which should be distinguished in this connexion. When the person I call the 'individual-vector' dies, whether by a natural death or as the result of an accident, he may still survive as a deified ghost. This is truer still if he should happen to be assassinated. The murder is all that is required to unleash a will for revenge, and this is bound to embitter the original fanaticism. But there must also take place a substitution of sorts: the dead leader must have a successor to act in his stead. If the substitution cannot be effected a derangement tends to occur, which may have the effect of gravely weakening the fanaticism—at any rate in the long run. It is a very different matter when the individual-vector somehow contrives to betray the very idea for which he stood. Here the disorder would be far greater, for this is something in the existential order, the individual not being conceived as a mere contingent representative of something transcendental. The bond is far more intimate, far more concrete. And in fact, if not in logic, there is always a danger of a recoil against the idea itself—for the very reason that, as we have seen, it is not the *idea* that is the fanaticizing element. It should be noted, too, that whatever the form it takes, the disorder strikes a blow at this particular fanaticism, because fanaticism on principle excludes any such disorder. It is bound to look like a 'give' under excessive strain; but a giving way under strain may lead to snapping or complete collapse.

Clearly the idea of the *mob* should be introduced here. In view of what is happening all about us we may say that the masses, considered as such, are essentially 'fanaticizable'. Here we may usefully refer to what Ortega y Gasset has to say in his book on *The Revolt of the Masses*. He points out that in those groups which are distinctively neither crowds nor masses, the mutual attraction among their members is some desire, some idea or ideal, which in its very nature is exclusive of large numbers. The mob, on the other hand, can be defined as such to the extent that it transcends, psychologically, the point where individuals are constituted in groups. 'An individual becomes part of the mob when his valuation of himself, good or bad, depends on no quality peculiar to



himself; still more when the feeling of being exactly like everyone else occasions no chagrin but positive satisfaction. . . . The characteristic of our world is that the commonplace individual, aware of his mediocrity, has the effrontery to proclaim the rights of mediocrity, and on the strength of this imposes them universally. . . . The mob flattens to its own level all that is unlike itself: all that excels it; all that has quality, individuality and distinction. Whoever is unlike everyone else, and thinks differently from everyone else, is in serious danger of finding himself eliminated. But it is obvious that *everyone else* is not *everyone*. "Everyone" used to be normally the complete unity of the mob plus the various specialized and dissident minorities. Today, however, everyone just means the mob.' This, I think, is one of the most lucid diagnoses ever made of the contemporary world. Since it was written, already a long time ago, the situation has grown worse, and always in the direction Ortega y Gasset indicated. It is only since his time that we have been able to realize how much the masses are accessible to propaganda; how much, too, they are thereby fanaticizable. 'Not that the mass-man,' he went on to explain, 'is a fool. On the contrary, he is more intelligent today than in any previous age, he has greater mental capacity; but his abilities are of no use to him. . . . That vast accumulation of commonplaces and prejudices, shreds of ideas or mere empty words, jumbled up in his brain completely at random—all this he regards as final perfection.' This picture of the mass-man agrees exactly with the 'they': the *Man* described by Heidegger in his great work. But what we have to show more precisely is *why* the mass-man is fanaticizable. His 'permeability', it seems to me, is due to the fact that the individual, before he can belong to the mob and turn into the mass-man, must first of all—quite unconsciously, of course—be emptied of the substantial reality that belonged to him initially as a person, and even of that which was implied by his belonging to a small concrete group. Now the function, incredibly baneful, of the press, radio and cinema, is just that of a steam-roller, crushing this original reality flat, and leaving in its place a collection of ideas and images, superimposed one upon another and bereft of all roots in the actual *being* of the subject. Everything would then seem to show that the function of propaganda is to provide some sort of nourishment, to sate the instinctive hunger of beings stripped of their personal reality. In so doing it will create in them a second nature, wholly artificial, dependent for subsistence

on a passion: a passion, in fact, that is nothing other than fanaticism.

This passion, it must be added, is fundamentally one of fear: it implies an unconfessed feeling of insecurity, which is externalized in aggressiveness. Moreover the existence of this secret fear explains why fanaticism always implies a refusal to call in question, and it is the essence of this refusal we have next to consider. Such an inquiry is the more necessary in that we find ourselves now in that ill-defined region where the mind is all too apt to mistake fanaticism for faith.

The believer, obviously enough, is bound to treat as temptations the doubts that occasionally assail him. But we cannot help asking: on what conditions can such an attitude be justified?

Unquestioning acceptance is clearly legitimate only in connexion with the absolute transcendence of the object of faith; such transcendence, in fact, is its only valid basis. After all, absolute transcendence is only another aspect of what has always been called the infinite, something beyond our capacities, in the presence of which we can only recognize our own nothingness. But in as much as we experience this infinite or transcendent reality of God, we strictly deny ourselves the right to question this affirmation, because any such questioning would imply on our part a pretension we abandoned for good at the outset.

But it is all too clear that if we substitute some idol for this infinite God, such a calling in question instantly ceases to be reprehensible. On the contrary it becomes a duty, incumbent on us if we are to retain our integrity as thinking beings. For it is of the very nature of an idol to be broken, or else to incite its former worshippers to revolt.

It must be noticed I am not arguing from a purely Christian standpoint. This transcendent and infinite God is also the God of the Jews and the God of Islam. But if faith in such a God is invaded by fanaticism—and there is much of this, as we know, among the followers of Mahomet, though no more than in certain Jews and plenty of Christians—it happens, I think, to the extent that additional elements are present, mediatory influences such as a prophet or a church. These, instead of remaining purely mediatory, are invested by the fanatical believer with unjustified prerogatives, incompatible with that frailty which belongs to a creature as such. This is something that calls for lengthy examination and careful distinctions, impossible within the limits of an

article such as this. But the essential idea to bear in mind seems simple enough after all, and nothing is easier than to illustrate it with contemporary examples: the Marx of *Kapital* in the eyes of fanatical communists today, or the Hitler of *Mein Kampf*. The assimilation may outrage some people, but it is inescapable. In one case, as in the other, a book is treated as holy, though it is merely the work of a human creature, without any claim whatsoever to be infallible. Here the refusal to call in question is essentially fanatical, and it is at the root of all the calamities that fanaticism brings in its train. The day when a Marxist (shall we say) comes to recognize honestly that the work of Marx, even though it be considered to have a certain timeless value, belongs to an historical context profoundly modified since his time—that will be the last of the fanatical communist! The principal merit of the critical spirit lies precisely in its ‘defanaticizing’ power; it is only logical, therefore, that in the world we live in the critical spirit is tending to disappear and its value is not even recognized. It would be worth investigating the reasons, incidentally, why the critical spirit, in the course of the last quarter of a century, has declined to the frightening extent it has. It is no doubt true that a false and very deplorable philosophy of life—certain elements of which can be found in Nietzsche; others, of course, in Sorel and his disciples—has helped to determine this retrograde movement. But this is merely on the level of ideas, and comparatively superficial. We have to dig much deeper than this: for such a philosophy could never have taken the hold it has spiritually, without some previous evolution taking place—and a very profound evolution, either mental or emotional. In this connexion, I imagine, we should have to find room for the pernicious part that has been played by speed, and the belief in the value of speed: by that impatience, in a word, which has contributed so profoundly to altering the very rhythm of the spiritual life.

Apart from this, we should have to ask in what conditions any idea or person—or, to be more exact, a dangerous complex of idea and person—tends to acquire the fanaticizing influence we have seen it has. I shall be careful here not to draw rash generalizations from a philosophy of history that is liable to be challenged. It will be enough to describe what we see before our eyes. One simple fact strikes the most casual observer: we see young people who have had an intensive education, with every opportunity to

develop the critical spirit, engulfed in a fanaticism that completely shuts them off from all who dare to think differently. No doubt in principle it would not be wise to challenge their good faith; but it would be much too simple to pretend they are merely actuated by ambition or opportunism. Surely we have here a pathological condition, though it is impossible to say definitely whether the disease is that of the reason or the sensibility: the phenomenon occurs wherever the two are in contact.

I feel it is necessary to insist here on an aspect of fanaticism not yet sufficiently underlined. The fanaticized consciousness seems to be rendered insensitive to everything not in the influence of its own magnetic field. Take those millions of unfortunates deported to the shores of the Arctic Ocean or other desolate regions, where they are doomed sooner or later to die of hunger or cold: mention these to a Stalinist, and if he is not content with simply denying the fact he will argue speciously that it is a painful necessity, one that is unavoidable in any period of transition. 'You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs': that dreadful proverb is the homely expression of this argument. But our Stalinist makes this plea only because he has been so conditioned that he can form no notion of the question at issue: insensibility, here, is bound up with a prodigious deficiency of imagination, or rather these are two aspects of one and the same phenomenon. It is truly pathological, because it is of the same order as that the clinical physician records, when he notes the patient fails to react to particular stimuli. Language, it is true, is very long-suffering; and it will always be possible to describe this as nothing pathological but the sign of a cheerful and magnificent fatalism. It is as though we boldly maintained that the feverish condition of a sufferer from tuberculosis is merely a symptom of glowing life. Which all goes to show that the world we live in is in a state of confusion and bewilderment, unparalleled perhaps since the ages of barbarism, and involving both the categories of good and evil and even what is entitled to be called life or death.

From this point of view the problem requires to be examined more closely. What are the factors, we should ask, that bring about a state of partial insensibility, a counterpart, indeed, to what I shall deliberately call a 'tetanizing' of the consciousness? Probably the answer is to be found, not so much in psychology as it is now understood, but in what I should like to call a biology of the consciousness. Here I am referring principally to fatigue, a

state to be felt but little capable of being thought; perhaps it is impossible to form any concept of it.

Without lending myself to any hasty generalization I think I may state that, in the world that is ours today, there is an ever-increasing multitude whose consciousness is really and truly *defocalized*; moreover the technical achievements that have so prodigiously speeded the tempo of their lives—I have chiefly in mind, of course, the cinema and the radio—are what have contributed most to effect this defocalizing. What I mean is this: we may claim in principle, I think, that a human being normally exists in relation to other beings, whether human or not, to which he is spatially adjacent and also linked by feelings of intimacy. It is these feelings of intimacy that constitute, I submit, a focalizing element. Alternatively one might speak of a real constellation, material and spiritual, created naturally for every human being. But for plenty of reasons, hardly necessary to enumerate, this constellation is in process of dissolving. That is true chiefly, of course, of the proletariat of our great cities; but there is also an agricultural proletariat; and apart from this double proletariat there are numerous intellectuals who fancy they serve as its consciousness and reflect its aspirations. In this, no doubt, they are grievously deceived; yet, in very different ways, the process of dissolution is at work with them too.

But by some mysterious process—its causes probably lie in the deepest strata of human nature—an imaginary focus tends to be substituted for the real, which if not entirely destroyed has lost almost entirely its power of radiation. Such an imaginary focus may be set in space or time, more often in space *and* time—a mythical space-time—which may be the idyllic Russia of the readers of *Humanité*, or the classless society finally to be achieved by the proletarian revolution. I take this example because it is obviously the most typical. But the would-be millenarianism of the Hitlerian doctrinaires implied just the same sort of imaginary focus; in fact we are bound to admit that every fanaticism, even that which is more strictly religious in character, appears to coalesce about a similar centre, whether we call that centre Rome or Mecca. Rudolf Kassener may have had some such idea in his mind when he wrote, in his book on the nineteenth century, that what fanaticism involves is a complete permutation of the understanding and the imagination, the latter always tending to take the place of the former. But the fact that



appears to emerge, in my view at least, is that the relation between the consciousness and the imaginary focus is—to return to a word I used just now—essentially ‘tetanizing’. It is not enough to say it is fundamentally presumptuous or defiant, that it implies ‘I state this, whatever anyone else says’; it involves something more: the will to annihilate all who dare to deny. In other words, we are no longer on the intellectual plane at all. The situation, I think, could be aptly described by talking of the fanaticizing ‘charge’ of an affirmation, much as one speaks of an electric charge. But here we have something extraordinarily difficult to conceive, something incapable of being conceptualized, as I said just now in connexion with fatigue: fanaticism, one might say, introduces into the domain of thought—or what should be the domain of thought—certain processes that are strictly corporal; and it is fanatical, I suppose, precisely to the extent it is corporalized. It should be noticed, of course, that there is a world of difference between corporalization such as this and a true incarnation, of which the former is merely a perverse caricature.

But it will now be easier, I believe, to recognize the difference between fanaticism and faith, which at the beginning of our inquiry seemed momentarily obscured. At this point, I see, I must refer to a distinction I have made elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The initial point I made then was that there is a tendency today to confuse faith with religious opinion, whereas the two belong to totally different regions of the mind.

But it is impossible not to see that the fanaticism I have sought to define is nothing but opinion pushed to its utmost limits, with all that implies of blind ignorance of its own grounds. Notice, too, that whatever the aims of the fanatic, or whatever he thinks to be his aims, even if his fancied intention be the uniting of mankind, all he can effect in practice is to divide humanity; but since he cannot be a party to such a division, he is led, as we have seen, to will the suppression of his opponents. And it is with this end in view that he always strives to represent them in the grossest and most degrading forms he can imagine. (Readers may call to mind the ‘Slimy Snake’.<sup>2</sup>) He really thinks of them as just obstacles to be smashed or destroyed; for having

<sup>1</sup> *Du refus à l'invocation*, pp. 161 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> ‘*La Vipère Lubrique*’: a favourite Stalinist slogan, applicable to almost any opponent of the régime.

ceased entirely to behave as a thinking being himself, he is incapable any longer of forming the faintest idea of any other thinking being. It is therefore quite understandable that he should use every means to defame at the outset those he seeks to exterminate. Here we come to the techniques of vilification. There is no difference, as it cannot be too often repeated, between the material means used by the Nazis in their concentration camps, to degrade their victims in their own eyes and drag them through the mire, and those the propagandists of the Soviet employ, to blacken and discredit the reputation of their adversaries. And this is not all. We have also to consider (though the full details are not yet known to us) the physical and psychological means that are employed, to enlist the adversary himself as an accomplice, and so make him prepare and ensure his destruction.

The essential point to notice, it seems to me, in all this, and in what concerns the technique of vilification in general, is the fearful and deadly logic behind all these manifestations, often judged too simply as monstrous or perverted. Actually they are merely corollaries of fanaticism: they are not some extraneous phenomenon superadded to it. It all follows from the fact that fanaticism, by definition, is incompatible with any respect for truth; and as truth demands such respect we may declare unhesitatingly that the fanatic is the enemy of truth—if only because he seeks to appropriate it to his own advantage. And this holds good at every possible level. Not long ago Jacques Maritain made the assertion<sup>1</sup> that it is possible, strictly speaking, to be a Catholic without being a Thomist, but not possible to be an intelligent one. There we have the statement of a fanatic pure and simple; and we could show how it is possible to proceed, by scarcely perceptible stages, from such a venial fanaticism to a fanaticism that is not venial.

But we have seen with blinding clearness, in the course of recent years, how truth and justice are so closely connected as to be actually indistinguishable. As humanity's greatest thinkers of every age have perceived—Spinoza, for instance, not less than Plato—justice is impossible where truth is not respected. But a respect for truth demands more than fine phrases; it means keeping open even the narrowest approaches, by which we may hope, if not to achieve our goal, at least to draw near to it.

It is now clear why, as I pointed out at the beginning, mere

<sup>1</sup> At a recent *Semaine des Ecrivains Catholiques*.

scepticism is of no avail. Fanaticism must be combated in the name of truth and the structural conditions that make truth possible; certainly not in the name of any flabby relativism, which would have it that all definite opinions are equally valid, and remain equally divorced from inaccessible reality. It is even a question whether scepticism, in practice, does not actually prepare the ground on which fanaticism afterwards may develop unimpeded.

I would point out, too, that we have been living, and are still living, in an atmosphere poisoned by the germs of fanaticism. It was realizing this, in the very first months that succeeded the Liberation, that I wrote an article entitled 'The Philosophy of the Purge'.<sup>1</sup> It may be objected that where there is hypocrisy there cannot be fanaticism. But here we must notice a question of degree: the bad faith inseparable from fanaticism, without ceasing to be bad faith, may be very imperfectly conscious of itself and so give the observer the impression of hypocrisy. There is such bad faith nearly everywhere today. It is particularly visible in the opinions one sees expressed on certain contemporary problems, which seem all but incapable of any practical solution—I am thinking, in particular, of the problem of Indo-China. As I have remarked elsewhere, problems are teeming in the world today; not only so, but they have a character of virulence perhaps never before equalled. The atmosphere thus created is very favourable to fanaticism. A recognition of the inextricable, as such, is something possible only to a tiny élite; moreover, from the practical point of view, what is inextricable is barely distinguishable from a deadlock. Hence a strong temptation to fanatical intransigence. It is a temptation comparable to that of performing an operation, so as to have done with a patient who has been lingering too many years. The result in either case is generally fatal.

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophie de l'Épuration: contribution à une théorie de l'hypocrisie dans l'ordre politique*, published in Canada.



# THE PHILOSOPHY OF FICTION

By T. S. GREGORY

ENGLISH empiricism was a post-war philosophy, not in truth a philosophy, but a formula for peace and accommodation. Locke's Essay was conceived long before he wrote it, when the King's restoration promised to reconcile the late conflict:

I no sooner perceived myself in the world [says Locke], but I found myself in a storm which has lasted almost hitherto and therefore cannot but entertain the approaches of calm with the greatest joy and satisfaction: and this, methinks, obliges me both in duty and gratitude to endeavour the continuance of such a blessing by disposing men's minds to obedience to that government which has brought with it the quiet settlement . . . and I would men would be persuaded to be so kind to their religion, their country and themselves as not to hazard again the substantial blessings of peace and settlement in an over-zealous contention.

Such 'kindness', known as toleration or as 'sense and reason' or as 'latitude' or 'common-sense' implied a change in religion, country and self, a change from aspiration to acquiescence, from high calling to prudence: it required and established a new culture fenced and defined by a new kind of universal, the experience that all men value, the values that all men recognize. And 'all men' was the name given to the group or level or tradition which might be counted as a neighbourhood, vague enough to refuse contention and firm enough to co-operate in the 'substantial blessings of peace'. To pursue the speculative or the practical reason to its end is to explore the no man's land left by religious and civil strife. As Jeremy Taylor says:

Should we go abroad in the world and ask as many as we meet What is Truth? we should find it a changeable and uncertain notion which everyone cloaths his own apprehensions with. Truth is in every sect and party, though they speak inconsistencies among

themselves and contradictions to one another. Truth is the Turkish Alcoran, the Jewish Talmud, the Papists' Councils, the Protestants' Catechisms and Models of Divinity—each of these in their proper place and region. Truth is a various uncertain thing and changes with the air and the climate—'tis Mahomet at Constantinople, the Pope at Rome, Luther at Wittenberg, Calvin at Geneva, Arminius at Oldwater, Socinus at Cracow, and each of these are sound and orthodox in the circuit of their own reign and dominion.

Jeremy Taylor was thinking of the kind of Truth which theologians explore, and like other doctors of the English Church was ready to transfer its authority to the conscience void of offence. As Dr. Cudworth said, 'he that endeavours really to mortify his lusts and to comply with the truth in his life which his conscience is convinced of is more a Christian, though he never heard of Christ than he that believes all the vulgar articles of the Christian faith, and plainly denieth Christ in his life'. But while there is much to be said for the emphasis on 'truth in life', the English habit of nominalism welcomed the natural but unsound inference that virtue is all, that metaphysics, even where it was harmless was 'spinning cobwebs', and theology positively dangerous where it was not subdued to the function of maintaining social conduct. 'No opinions contrary to human society,' said Locke, 'or to those moral rules which are necessary to the preservation of civil society are to be tolerated by the magistrate.' And his mind was running not on the perils of antinomianism but on 'those who under pretence of religion challenge any manner of authority'. There are cogent metaphysical arguments against the doctrine of 'innate ideas' but the real strength of the empirical conviction against them lies rather in the political and utilitarian consideration that they make Man more than Englishman: they admit universals where life needs locality.

Philosophically this mind runs to empiricism; in politics it is insular. 'We are an island, confined to it by God Almighty not as a Penalty but a Grace, and one of the greatest that can be given to Mankind, Happy confinement, that hath made us Free, Rich and Quiet.' It transfers the respect in which earlier generations held status and law, to property; for property is not innate like status or universal like law, but empirical and useful: it comes within the ambit of sensation and reflexion. Compare, for example, the pride of Daniel Defoe in the city of London with the civic patriotism of Venice or Rome or Paris. 'Here,' he says, 'ships from all parts

arrive and several of the most considerable branches of trade are confined to this place by law: the East India trade is all settled here: the Greenland trade deliver all here: the Italian thrown silk is confined to be imported here, and here only and at no other port in England: here the African company import all their gold, and the South Sea company all their silver: in a word, it is the great gulf of the British trade; and as it comes in here, so it goes out again from here to all parts of the nation, circulating in home trade from the merchant to the consumer.' 'They eat more flesh in London in a month than they do in all Spain in a year.' 'Edinburgh, though a capital of a kingdom, had not above ten or twelve hackney coaches; and no city or other town in Britain has any at all except London . . . eight hundred hackney-coachmen and about two thousand horses.' 'The country sends up their corn, their malt, their cattle, their fowls, their coals, their fish, all to London; and London sends back spice and sugar, wines, drugs, cotton, linen, tobacco, and all foreign necessities to the country, and keeps them all in motion.' 'London consumes all, circulates all, exports all and at last pays for all: and this is trade: this greatness and wealth of the city is the soul of the commerce of all the nation'—and so on. Defoe never exhausts his three main interests, of trade, morals and family life. Educated in a dissenting academy Defoe represents the middle-class realism which had overcome the Church and King. He moves among the 'domestic employments' with which David Hume sought to balance the systems of philosophers; and through the Whig century this is the cause that has increase until the Wealth of Nations and the great age of economy.

The heart of empirical thinking is the family, which needs common-sense and sound morals but can get on well enough without the speculative reason. The articles of Hume's belief and scepticism together delineate human nature as it appears enclosed in domestic life. He relies on Custom, Nature, Necessity, Moral sentiment, the Passions, Impressions and Ideas. He repudiates all that might promise to establish any wider connotation of humanity, rational universals of all kinds, real causes, substance and all the questions which demand some such metaphysical hypothesis. That his negative arguments are ingenious but inconclusive, and above all, that having abolished 'understanding', he consoles himself with sociability as if he were none the worse, is evidence that he is not thinking of understanding in any valid sense of the word. Moreover, he was twenty-eight when the

Treatise 'fell dead-born from the press'. 'I published my Treatise and immediately went down to my mother and my brother, who lived at his country house and was employing himself very judiciously and successfully in the improvement of his fortune.' And thereafter he consistently employed his industrious leisure on history and essays without advancing to any new philosophical position or discovering any new arguments to support the old. In fact, he was not a philosopher, except as Voltaire, Dr. Johnson and Rousseau were philosophers; nor was his age an age of reason. Indeed he draws the contrast between the questions which agitated the previous century and the mood in which his own generation answered or dismissed them:

The *intense* view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another. Where am I or what? from what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? Whose favour shall I court, whose anger must I dread? What beings surround me? and on whom have I any influence, or who have any influence on me? I am confounded with all these questions and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed with the deepest darkness and utterly deprived of the use of every member and faculty.

We can compare the accent of complacent irony with the tones of Pascal and Milton in the same strait or even with the helpless disgust of Jonathan Swift. But:

More fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, Nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation and lively impression of my senses which obliterate all these chimaeras. I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse and am merry with my friends.

At the same time Hume is

sensible that there are in England in particular many honest gentlemen who being always employed in their domestic affairs or amusing themselves in common recreations have carried their thoughts very little beyond those objects which are every day exposed to their

senses. And indeed of such as these I pretend not to make philosophers; nor do I expect them either to be associates in these researches or auditors of these discoveries. They do well to keep themselves in their present situation, and, instead of refining them into philosophers, I wish we could communicate to our founders of systems, a share of this gross earthy mixture.

In other words, let us get back home. And such was the temper of the Whig Revolution. It was a 'gross earthy mixture'. The national and local administration henceforth was part of the domestic affairs or common recreations of honest gentlemen. 'Man born in a family is compelled to maintain society,' says Hume, 'from necessity, from natural inclination and from habit. The same creature in his further progress is engaged to establish political society in order to administer justice without which there can be no peace among them, no safety, no mutual intercourse. We are therefore to look upon all the vast apparatus of our government as having no other object or purpose but the distribution of justice, or in other words the support of the twelve judges. Kings and parliaments, fleets and armies, officers of the court and revenue ambassadors, ministers and privy-counsellors are all subordinate in their end to this part of administration. Even the clergy, as their duty leads them to inculcate morality may justly be thought, so far as regards this world, to have no other useful object of their institution.' The weakness of the High Churchmen and royalists in the war of parties was that 'as far as regards this world' they were committed to the same purpose. Their reason for desiring uniformity or comprehension, their notion of the divinely ordained magistrate and a divinely legitimate succession sprang from a family sentiment, and a family history. Their piety flourished in a family setting. Their opposition to Rome and their strong sense of parochial duty were mutually necessary aspects of the same domestic religion. They never thought clearly or with conviction of an universal ecclesia, rooted in the nature of God, never conquered the insularity which Henry VIII and Elizabeth had imposed upon them, and while they maintained a high level of Christian practice and devotion within the structure of a homogeneous and rural family life, they had never reconciled the universal validity of reason with revelation. Even Cudworth had stated 'Scripture faith' in terms that really belonged to the non-conformist: 'Scripture faith is not a mere believing of historical things and upon artificial arguments or testimonies only, but a

certain higher and diviner power in the soul, that peculiarly correspondeth with the deity.'

And the dissenters practised a family religion, if for no other reason, because they had never been allowed (except under Oliver) to practise any other kind. Calvinism is one of the great heresies; it is also a political faith for heroes; but it is also the genius of family religion. A community no longer believing in the Catholic Church, and excluded from any other kind of supra-national civilization, a small, homogeneous group speaking one language, knowing one level of culture, simple and single-minded would relapse upon the type of creed which Calvin substituted for the Catholic faith. Forget external aids and venerable traditions, instituted theologies, canon law, great buildings and vast systems like monasticism and all the splendour of spiritual culture and history; shrink into some steep valley where a few village communities have practised the simplest religion immemorially, and there God will seem to be the Father of His elect. The equality, predestination, severity, exclusiveness, the intuitive understanding between those who belong, the distrust or disapproval of aliens—these are all characteristic of Calvinian piety and family religion. In various stages, variously modified, these were the features of the Dissenters' religion in the days of the Test Acts. Translated into the language of analysis, such was the human nature which Hume adopted for his 'cautious observation', a human nature whose custom nature and necessity supplied all its positive predicates, while the grandiose systems designed to describe or account for the universe were mere words concealing the unknowableness of the beyond.

John Locke was, perhaps, the most consistent and literal exponent of this domestic society. He was, above all, a family servant. His *Thoughts concerning Education* stay with the child at home. He talks of play-things, classifies crying, has shrewd thoughts on children's pertness, curiosity, sauntering, bogeys—'Be sure to preserve his tender Mind from all Impressions and Notions of Spirits and Goblins or any fearful Apprehensions in the Dark. This he will be in danger of from the Indiscretion of Servants.' He devises lesson-games, and gives advice about children's excuses. 'I place Virtue as the first and most necessary of those Endowments that belong to a Man or a Gentleman,' and with that respectable purpose examines domestic trivialities with precise attention. Nothing matters to him but experience. The same eye



for particulars, the same lack of innate ideas gives his prose its comfortable and untidy leisure. It is a drift, not a deliberate advance. Locke was more of a journalist than a philosopher. He reports conversations, and knows that a 'well-managed bottle' will draw out a man's mind. He counts the steps between the bastions at Gronningen, inquires of the chimney tax and excises on 'beer, wine, bread and everything'. He visits the Labadists at Wienwart, not as desiring to pray with them, but just to see; he gives an unfavourable account of them—'all their discourse carries with it a supposition of more purity in them than ordinary and as if nobody was in the way to heaven but they; not without a mixture of canting in referring this immediately to the Lord.' He watches the Prince of Nassau make his solemn entry into Leeward, sees the camels at Arnhem and asks how they are fed—'on hay and a paste of rye meal: and upon bidding they lie down resting on their sternum'.

His diary entries start day after day with 'saw'—'saw a house a little out of the way where they say Pilate lived in banishment'. 'We saw several digging the ground and some ploughing with a very little light plough with one handle, drawn by a pair of cows, steers or asses—the most considerable thing we saw was their granary one hundred steps long and thirty-six broad'—and so on. He does not select. He has no scale of preference. He will not look for objects of art like Horace Walpole, or 'great' men like Boswell, or the quality and fashion, like Chesterfield. He does not travel for religion or science. There is no end or scale. Mere succession is enough, succession and utility. His analysis of experience uses an acquisitive idiom unawares—such words as 'furnish', 'employed', 'got', 'set of ideas which could not be had', as if the 'actings of our minds' were a trading expedition or a business deal. And in fact he was inclined to think them such. 'For if a child have a poetic vein, 'tis to me the strangest thing in the world that the father should desire or suffer it to be cherished or improved. Methinks, the parents should labour to have it stilled and suppressed as much as may be . . . for it is very seldom seen that anyone discovers mines of gold or silver in Parnassus. 'Tis a pleasant air but a barren soil; and there are few instances of those who have added to their patrimony by anything they have reaped from thence.' There we recognize the spirit which Swift denounced in the Examiner, 'These men come,' he wrote, 'with the spirit of shopkeepers to frame rules for the administration of kingdoms: or as if they thought the whole

art of government consisted in the importation of nutmegs and the curing of herrings.'

Hume is not a pioneer. He did not forswear the pleasures of speculation so whole-heartedly. The strength and weakness of the *Treatise* lies, as he recognized, in the attempt to 'embrace a manifest contradiction'. 'When we trace up the human understanding to its first principles, we find it to lead us into such sentiments as seem to turn into ridicule all our past pains and industry and to discourage us from further inquiries. Nothing is more curiously inquired after by the mind of man than the causes of every phenomenon . . . and how must we be disappointed when we learn that this connexion, tie or energy lies merely in ourselves.' It was his temperament, perhaps, to trace 'first principles', and only when he had proved by experiment that impressions and ideas cannot support the notion of 'first principle' did he abandon the methods of analytical philosophy for an empirical habit of mind. This delay was natural enough, since the metaphysical or theological systems which had made men 'unkind to themselves' no longer threatened their interest, but the lack of them left a dogmatic slumber, an inconclusive boredom, felt everywhere in Europe and above all by a young man who 'carries his ambition so far as to think of compassing the globe under these disadvantageous circumstances'. It is ill work reconciling the death of metaphysics with great enterprises, and if the large patterns of faith and reason had been discredited, science, empire and invention still made demands beyond the scope of domestic employment and common recreation. 'My studious disposition, my sobriety and my industry, gave my family a notion that the law was a proper profession for me; but I found an insurmountable aversion to everything but the pursuits of philosophy and general learning; and while they fancied I was poring upon Voet and Vinnius, Cicero and Virgil were the authors which I was secretly devouring.' It is not as philosophy but as a kind of autobiography or confession that the *Treatise* should be examined. Hume's attempt to reconcile the conflict between the demand of his human nature and the supply of human experience brought him to certain 'errors and perplexities' which illuminate the history of the Whig century and the revival of analysis in our own.

The 'error and perplexity' appear at the beginning. If Hume had really made up his mind to the gross mixture, he would have avoided the difficulties which startled Kant and established



Hume's reputation as a sceptic. The gentlemen 'employed in their domestic affairs' escaped the 'hideous hypothesis' without resorting to paradox by the simple expedient of dealing with things and not with impressions. They were the real empiricists. They did not read Hume's *Treatise* when it 'fell dead-born from the press'; nor have they made much of its argument since. Hume himself states his promises in terms that suggest a divided allegiance:

All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds which I call impressions and ideas. The difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness with which they strike upon the mind and make their way into our thought and consciousness.

But what is it that 'strikes' or 'makes its way'. What causes the impression? 'There must be some impressions,' he says, 'which without any introduction make there first appearance in the soul' and 'these depend on natural and physical causes'; 'they arise in the soul from the constitution of the body, from the animal spirits or from the application of objects to the external organs'. What he means by the 'application of objects' he never explains; but the phrase appears, on the face of it, to revive the older theory of knowledge which had evoked the contempt of Thomas Hobbes: 'the Philosophy schools through the universities of Christendom . . . say for the cause of vision that the thing sendeth forth on every side a visible species (in English) a visible show, apparition or aspect or a being seen, the receiving whereof into the eyes is seeing. . . . Nay, for the cause of understanding they say that the thing understood sendeth forth intelligible species . . . which coming into the understanding make us understand.' This notion of objects as, in some sense, living and active, of nature as organic and alive, is the most venerable and perhaps the most fruitful of cosmological ideas. It was destined to return with force. Until the Cartesian revolution it held the field, and at the empirical level it cannot be plausibly disputed. Hume devoted all his analysis to demolishing its only serious rival the mechanical theory of the 'simplicity of the universe'. It was a doctrine for poets which had produced not only a rich and perennial harvest of magic and astrology but also the theory of a correspondence between man and the universe abundantly alive in Shakespeare and Donne, and the 'metaphysical' poets. Indeed, it would be difficult to

imagine the birth of poetic diction or to take Virgil seriously without it.

Yet if it was Hume's purpose to reject the poetic fantasies of the old physics with the mechanical monism of the new, he ought to have found means to correct or to synthesize the two hypotheses. If Locke and Hume had been philosophers by vocation and conviction they would have grasped the problem of knowledge as metaphysical rather than psychological, a problem rather of the object known than of the mind knowing. There is no valid escape, at any rate for the empiricist from the world of objects into the percipient mind. Hume was not at liberty to dismiss the question with the facile gesture 'that as these depend upon natural and physical causes, the examination of them would lead me too far from my present subject into the sciences of anatomy and natural philosophy'. His argument leads straight into the empirical sciences which interested Locke as part of his general curiosity, but which Hume was too much of an *a priori* rationalist to pursue. If by the 'striking' of impressions or 'application of objects' Hume had meant a real transaction, he would have been driven, if not to a doctrine of real causes, at any rate, far away from the theory which he did advance instead of it. His theory of cause as a fiction engendered in the mind by constant association or union of impressions relieves him of metaphysics only at the cost of reducing the understanding to an insignificant and mechanical drift of ideas and leaves the process of sensation obscure without hope of dawn. If mind exists only as reflexion of environment, and there is no really known environment, the understanding has not so much 'escaped shipwreck' as failed to fashion a ship altogether. But if we do not press the paradox to its illogical conclusion, what kind of environment is it that can be said to 'strike' or 'impress' or 'make its way into' the soul? Leibnitz and Berkeley had essayed the problem as philosophers. The 'honest gentlemen' solved it *ambulando* in their domestic employment, but Hume (in his twenties) cannot decide for one kind or the other. Condemned by an 'insurmountable aversion to everything but the pursuits of philosophy and general learning' he 'cannot expect to associate' the real empiricists with his researches and turns real objects into 'pale images' and ideas. The sober, industrious young man who has no money to spare and no property to cultivate spends all his time in reading and thinking. He is not concerned in any scientific or expert fashion with the mind or its environment. He lives in books

and ideas, with the succession of events not as they really happen but as they have been recorded. Since the narrative yields only contiguous or attendant events in patterns methodized by the writer's and the reader's minds under the influence of custom, the reality of objects and objective causes can raise no problem.

In the world of rational and imaginative fiction whether it be poetry, history or novels, the question is what is imagined as happening to the imagined hero, or how in this world of books, the fictitious humanity assimilates and uses what is presented as its experience. It would be idle to discuss whether experience implies existence, and absurd to dispute whether there is real meaning in the verb to exist. We do not discuss whether Mrs. Bennet is a real person or Longbourne a real place. And as a novelist would properly dismiss unmeaning questions as to the substantial existence of his fictitious world, so Hume dismisses the doctrine of substance as a hypothesis which means nothing to the story. It is an 'unknown something in which particular qualities are supposed to inhere'. It is not a colour, a sound, a taste, a passion, an emotion. It contributes no predicate. 'We have, therefore, no idea of substance distinct from that of a collection of particular qualities; nor have we any other meaning when we either talk or reason concerning it.' And our talk and reasoning is the end of the matter. It is as if we were to deny the existence of our own optive nerve, because we can, in the nature of the case, never see it. Hume is not philosopher enough to ask seriously what leads to the notion of substance, for as the story contains nothing but fiction, that which is precisely not fictitious cannot be assimilated to his imaginative design.

So with his theory of cause. When, for example, Thackeray or Trollope elbows the narrative aside for a page or two to moralize in the reader's ear, we feel (and some readers welcome) the intrusion, since neither author nor reader is incident in the story, and in like manner, a postulate of real cause would intrude upon the stream of impressions and ideas which constitutes the empirical world. 'The idea of necessity arises from some impression. There is no impression conveyed by our senses which can give rise to that idea. It must therefore be derived from some internal impression or impression of reflexion. There is no internal impression which has any relation to the present business, but that propensity which custom produces to pass from one object to the idea of its usual attendant. This therefore is the essence of necessity. Upon

the whole, necessity is something that exists in the mind, not in objects; nor is it possible to form the most distant idea of it as a quantity in bodies.' By the time that the mind ascribes a cause 'passing from one object to the idea of the usual attendant', both objects have become 'ideas' and neither was ever anything but an 'impression' or 'sensation'.

The understanding is not an apprehension of real things, a door through which man passes whole into the embrace of a real world, or of real nature with its causal efficacies and mysteries, but a systematic remembrance of sensations. 'The simple view of any two objects or actions, however related, can never give us any idea of power or of connexion between them.' 'The repetition neither discovers nor causes anything in objects, but has an influence only on the mind by that customary transition it produces.' 'If we define a cause to be an object precedent and contiguous to another and so united with it in imagination that the idea of the one forms the mind to form the idea of the other and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other, we shall,' says Hume, 'make still less difficulty of assenting to this opinion.' We shall, at all events, make it clear that Hume is describing a literary world, presenting, as it were a reader's apology for taking history as something to be read not lived, and giving the world as a 'union in imagination' of events which have no dimensions outside it.

He can put the 'plain man's' view, of course, for that also can be impressed upon the mind and held as an idea. Fiction aims at 'realism'. 'Wherever ideas are adequate representations of objects, the relations, contradictions and agreements of the ideas are all applicable to the objects and this we may in general observe to be the foundation of all human knowledge.' The 'plain man' has a picture in his mind's eye of something outside himself and may compare the picture with the reality. The Treatise gives no room for such comparison or reference, since all the knowledge we have is ideas. But it may be that we seek not the foundation of human knowledge but the story or idea of the foundation of the idea of human knowledge, both derived from impressions, and that we seek these ideas in order to talk and reason. Such would pass for a fair account of what passed for philosophy among the intelligent critics in rectories and coffee-houses whose talk was exploited by the booksellers. We can compare ideas and enjoy the sensation of such ideas most readily by avoiding reference to real objects, as my Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim work out their strategy with

models and symbols. The experiment seen and the experiment remembered are reduced to one level of validity by being recorded: in the history of science, the record, and the hypothetical inferences are equally verbal and legible; they are but one kind of experience.

This would not be possible if an object were real in a sense that the idea is not real or if Hume were interested in the relation or likeness of thought to thing. But the practical value of the confusion of thought and thing, and of giving all experience the manageable and intelligible quality of fiction was incalculably great. Only when he stood back from the analytical game and asked himself in isolation what he had done with the world was he inclined to melancholy and then he exchanged it for another game, backgammon or the still more enthralling 'avocation' of English history. But the fiction of ordered experience which rejected as unreal all that was not impression or idea served in the lack of any faith to make a universe of an island. It endowed the individual with a kingdom in which his rights were sovereign and unchallenged. He could afford to forget or ignore all that he could not promptly evaluate and understand.

Hume confounded things with ideas and to that end employed a sophistry more self-conscious and acute than other men of his time. But though the *Treatise* was 'dead-born' it was not an untimely birth. Nor was it an original attempt like Berkeley's to provide an account of reality and theory of knowledge. It was a plausible analysis of the mind which enabled a small aristocracy to support its double function of administration and culture without strain and to be at once shrewd and cultivated. To reduce the world to impressions and ideas or to found principles of understanding on a cautious observation of human life is the secret of an easy mind. It contracts the horizon, and banishes the mysteries. It puts ideas and events on a level so that they slide into one another, and you can manage both elegantly with an air of sense and reason. There is no disturbing reality, or itch to reform; you are not confronted with vast and vain surmise, with huge aspirations or Gothic superstitions. Life is given in manageable doses, and everything behaves like the incidents of a historical narrative, or at a mannerly distance, seen through the frame of custom.

The method and idiom of Hume's political essays illustrate this complacency. They are built of large generalizations, supported with distant examples:



We may observe, that where a very extensive government has been established over many centuries, it spreads a national character over the whole empire and communicates to every part a similarity of manners. Thus the Chinese . . .

In small governments which are contiguous, the people have, notwithstanding, a different character, and are often as distinguishable in their manners as the most distant nations. Athens and Thebes . . .

The same national character commonly follows the authority of government to a precise boundary; and upon crossing a river or passing a mountain one finds a new set of manners with a new government. The Languedocians and Gascons . . .

This kind of instance carries no force of experience. Hume knows nothing of the Chinese, little of Athens and Thebes and not much more of Gascons and Languedocians, except as a tale that is told. They are ideas more 'pale', facts less actual than the generalizations which they are adduced to confirm. The strength of Hume's Essays lies in their reasoning *a priori*. If he rejects 'innate ideas' he nevertheless finds 'propensities inherent in human nature', assumes as readily as any rationalist that the human race can be discovered in 'the seclusion of his own room' and speaks as easily as all his generation of 'mankind'. He can take literary allusion as matter of fact since in his account of reality they are the same. So they were for most of his literate contemporaries. Chesterfield advised his son 'to study Ancient History in general, as other people do, that is, not to be ignorant of any of those facts which are universally received upon the faith of the best historians and whether true or false, you have them as other people have them'.

Not 'truth' but 'other people' are the ground of credence—the ground, that is, of experience, and of experimental science. Therein we discern not only the tribal consciousness which enabled a group of families to control a 'great empire' with a ludicrous insufficiency of actual knowledge, but the germ of the democracy which could face the vast expansion and new problems of the nineteenth century with a succession of illusions and fallacies in the confidence of a majority vote. Economics, the new religion, rested its dogmas not on 'truth' but on 'other people'. From 1832 onwards as the people with ever-dwindling qualification became the electorate, the appeal to 'first principles' faded altogether from English politics. Not the will of the people—for they had no will—but necessity, nature and custom were the voice

of God. Custom was the real constitution, and the tacit, almost instructive understanding that no conviction could excuse resistance to it. There was no need to formulate it, for it was 'the general sentiment of mankind'.

The philosophy of analysis which owns Hume as its progenitor retains his literary confusion. Its faith rests in language in so far as language is a complication of logical patterns, in observation and 'verification' in so far as these may be considered as complete and articulate. It is the analysis of fiction, the fiction of science: and as science itself is a process, not a complete articulation, it may be trusted to yield the initiative and end of intelligible speech *en passant*. Apart from such experience, apart, that is, from clear and distinct impressions, no predicate can possess literal meaning. But the premises of such a theory, the dogmatic faith on which it rests, cannot be reconciled with the conditions of experience, any better than Hume's doctrine of causeless impressions. Observation, verification and literal predicates are alike functions not of knowledge but of ignorance. We observe what we do not know, verify what we cannot affirm and make predicates, in order to give information. Prediction, hypothesis experiment and indeed all experience implies the substantial and active reality of that which is not, or is not yet, 'impressed upon the soul'. Reality resists and surprises: it cannot be confused with ideas: it subsists in an unseen dimension. Objects 'strike' or 'make their way' or 'are applied' and possess an efficacy: they are objects as they are believed to possess this independence and cease to be objects just in so far as they are assimilated to any system of experience. The assumption of any science or of any linguistic usage is a partnership, of known and unknown, and language is an act not merely a pattern. The 'literal' meaning, demanded by philosophies of analysis and nominalism is an illusion; it could be realized only by omniscience, and its appropriate field at the human level is not language (in the ordinary sense) but mathematics whose end is pure meaning emancipated from all the temporal irrelevance of experience. It is the nature of human intellect to be defeated and to seek defeat. It finds no rest and pretends no knowledge except in the company of metaphysical faith, and while it assigns the protected quiet of Academy or Garden to the disputes of analysis, and in the shadow of universal negation can play backgammon and write history as if nothing were doubtful, it will make or shatter a civilization in the strength of 'I believe'. Nominalism

misdirected the appetite for meaning, which aims at mathematics, to the sphere of metaphysics which contemplates that which is. It was a logic of exclusion and selection, accepting irrationally what it could not analyse, accepting, that is, by no right of its own, affirmations given in terms which it rejected. It was Hume's virtue to call the bluff. But he went no further. If analysis can reach the conclusion of his first book, it clearly demands a scrutiny and revision of its premises—not a game of backgammon: and if Hume had been a philosopher, even with the faults of his analysis, he would have attributed the suicide of reason to some insane hypothesis. That would have been a true empiricism. Instead of restoring the human understanding to its home, he fled into 'general learning' and was content with a prefabricated shelter in the grounds of the ancient ruin. That was better, perhaps, than the grand new mansion raised by Hegel and his successors; at least it was unpretentious. But it was no 'science of man'. Man was dead: he had no history: the passions and moral sentiments, the custom and nature were mere words. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that Hume had seen the validity of another understanding which is content to know and understand what *is*, a logic of analogy prepared to make predicates within the compass of language and not condemned to the exclusive precision of mathematics; but instead of confronting fairly the implications of experience—he read books. And it was this polite evasion that commended him to the Parisian salons, for there also intelligent men and women had elected to live in fiction, for a little while.

The scepticism, anarchy and bankruptcy which brought that world to an end failed to discredit, but rather confirmed the confusion of reality and fiction. The new Europe of Revolution and nationalism, of mass-mechanism and the Powers was bred of idealism and romance. Its science and administration combined to make the human mind the cause of its own experience. Its religion, a religion of experience, was devoted to humanizing this self-generated system and its most influential philosophy propounded the doctrine that man was the effluence and full expression of the universal Idea. This racial or cosmic solipsism was welcomed as the 'religion of the spirit'. It realized, on the widest imaginable scale, the denials and affirmations of Hume's Treatise. Henceforth custom, nature and necessity, the passions, moral sentiment, impressions and ideas, defined the frontiers of Man. There



was nothing beyond. Theology was the language of one set of impression-ideas, biology was another, physics another, history another to the last syllable of recorded experience. Cultures developed in insular seclusion. Economics, still the art of household management, multiplied about the problem of reconciling the natural necessity of the natural and necessary form of human association with systems of impression-idea given by an unsubstantial universe. Human nerves were preconditioned to accept as real what was offered to them as 'convenient' or 'useful' or 'efficient'. Objects were symbols of pleasure and pain which established the poles of moral sentiment. The depths of human impotence and dependence were rediscovered not as evidence of human creaturehood or subordination but as phenomena relevant to specialized systems of scientific curiosity and made available in the service of bodily, mental and social health. And health itself. We all know what that is: it can be felt and seen and diagnosed and described, like the performance of a machine.

But the true setting for such a fantasy is a world so familiar that the intuition of being comes as 'naturally as leaves to a tree', the world, for example, of the ancient rural communities which survived till the days of David Hume. And in the spacious times of Queen Victoria, Bismarck and Free Trade, the roots of European culture ran deep and invisible under the surface of storm and progress. The poets of nature and of anarchy were alike heirs of the ancient tradition: their nature had been methodized for many centuries, and, when they blasphemed, they blasphemed the God of the Christians. So long as custom, nature and necessity reveal in fact the lineaments discovered in the perennial philosophy and moral sentiment reacts with pain or pleasure to the same stimuli, the practical economy can afford any scepticism as an avocation or an exercise. It is well enough to spoil the metaphysician so long as one can live in Oxford and is not required to create it. Men can be kind to their religion, their country and themselves, when they have religion and country and self all ready to receive their kindness. Hume takes all his major premises for granted. The reason for his contempt of understanding is that there is little for understanding to do. But the heirs of Hume were not so well furnished as the heirs of Aristotle and Aquinas. Experience towered about them in huge masses of contingency, stretched away from them in measureless possibility. Nature was enormous; necessity was a chaos; and there was no custom. Moral sentiment shifted from

generation to generation and the passions swept civilized peoples into herd manias too evil to be reckoned as mere human crimes. All the presuppositions of empiricism have perished of the empirical emancipation. The world has ceased to be substantial indeed. Causality has been absorbed by the human scientist so that he is confronted with choice of being slave to his own omnipotence or an outlaw without direction. Hence it is meaningless to demand verification for propositions by means of sense data, since we can produce any sense data we please. The impression is lost for lack of an object to make it. Experience is indistinguishable from delusion until we have been recovered by the plenitude of Being.

# THE SITUATION IN MORAL PHILOSOPHY

By VINCENT TURNER, S.J.

WHAT is the best starting-point for instructing young men in philosophy? Some fifteen years ago, if one had put the query to a University tutor, in all probability he would have advised one to begin with ethics. Ethics is a subject that obviously interests young men, he would have said, and it is a tractable subject. Of course, he would have gone on to add, it has its pockets of problems where the issue is not very clear, but there are wide areas over which the lines of communication, at any rate, are safe: the ground is mapped and charted, certain distinctions are agreed on, the fallacies and the irrelevancies, the pitfalls and the booby-traps, have been located: we know where we are. It is a comparatively manageable subject, whereas other branches of philosophy are not: in 'theory of knowledge', say, or in metaphysics, if there is such a thing, we do not know where we are and hardly know how to take bearings. But no matter. After all, he would doubtless have urged, whatever be the differences between people's psychological or religious or sociological assumptions or convictions, everybody really knows not only what kinds of conduct, by and large, are right or wrong—they just *see*—but they know what they mean when they talk about right and wrong; they know what ethics is about.

Knowledge of right and wrong is knowledge and self-authenticating; it is, therefore, independent of vagaries in a man's other persuasions and outlook. Possibly in other matters we think as we do because we are made that way, but moral philosophy is privileged and can build on an uncovenanted mercy: in matters of right and wrong, we just know what is what; we grasp or apprehend or see it. Of course, such a philosopher would rightly have made clear, moral philosophy cannot claim to *teach* us what in general our duties are, and if we take to the subject with that expectation, we shall be disappointed and dissatisfied. We can indeed

learn to clarify our own minds and to analyse the complexities of moral situations, and in this fashion, no doubt, we enlighten our consciences in very important ways; but a moral philosopher does not tell us about our duties as an explorer may tell us about regions of the existence of which we were hitherto ignorant. Not only does he not do this, it cannot be done; and if a man cannot come to see that the keeping of promises, for instance, is a moral obligation, there is nothing to be done with him. Moral philosophy is concerned with the logical geography of concepts that we all know how to use and whose validity we can, on reflexion, see for ourselves; of course, the thought that a philosopher scrutinizes does not remain exactly as it was when he took it up for scrutiny; it is, presumably, developed. But moral philosophy is not itself moralizing.

This was the climate of yesterday. The philosophers who made it did a fine work. One consequence of it was that some interesting classical moralists, like Hume or Mill, came to look as crude as they are. None the less, it was a rarefied climate, constricting to the lungs. With few exceptions, and in spite of their unmetaphysical character, British moral philosophers had tended to think, until the present century, that morality had something to do with what they sometimes called 'the constitution of human nature', that it could be exhibited as essentially related to 'the nature of man' and not merely linked to some abstract and thin concept of the nature of things. In consequence, for all their mistakes, desires and sentiments and attitudes of will were not outside their ken, and the outlook within which they philosophized was at no far remove from the world in which they and their readers lived and moved. It was an outlook or a mental world in which the Natural Law theory, for instance, would have found the scenery not unfamiliar, little though it might have liked some of it.

But yesterday's climate was not this, and nothing so familiar. From the beginning of this century, ethics came to be intellectualized into simply a series of discrete intuitions that were independent of the rest of one's thinking. In these intuitions the rightness and wrongness of kinds of actions were immediately apprehended, and that was the end of the matter. Moral philosophy in the traditional sense was considered to rest on a mistake, the mistake of thinking (so it was alleged) that one has to find reasons for what one perfectly well knows all the time. Moreover (and this is the rub) this apprehended rightness or wrongness is a characteristic of

acts in the same sort of way in which yellow is a quality of some objects—it is like a quality—and it is described in the same sort of way, except that ethical characteristics are not natural, like yellow, but ‘non-natural’, and the describing or seeing is like seeing with the eyes, intuition, but is also unlike it, for it is not visual but intellectual perception.

The climate of today is at first glance very different from this. It was to be expected. We do not, in fact, talk about morals quite in the language of yesterday’s philosophers—which is only another way of saying that their idiom is in some respects alien to the manner in which we actually think or come to make up our minds in a practical decision and discuss or argue moral problems with one another. The ‘ethical intuition’ of yesterday is now an unfashionable piece of mental machinery. The doctrine that I too briefly summarized at the end of the last paragraph has been dubbed the Doctrine of the Inner Eye, and is in disfavour. For this disfavour there are several reasons, as we shall see. The one that weighs most with some of our contemporaries—and with some who have no axes to grind—is that there is no such Inner Eye as the Intuitionists postulate and no need to suppose that there is: there neither is nor is there any need for this para-optical seeing, any more than there is any need for the objective but ‘non-natural’ characteristics that this seeing is said to be a seeing of. ‘I should be quite prepared to assert,’ wrote a young philosopher recently, ‘that I understood the words “right” and “good”, but that I couldn’t remember ever intuiting rightness or goodness, and that I couldn’t imagine what it would be like to do so. And I think it is quite certain that I am not alone in this, but that there are a large number of people who are to be presumed capable of accurate reporting of their own cognitive experience and who would find nothing self-contradictory in saying what I say.’<sup>1</sup>

Today, then, a philosopher will say that thousands of people can declare, with perfect propriety and wittingly, that ‘I know that this is right’, but that there is no such intuition or Inner Eye as was taken for granted yesterday, nor yet any intuited ethical characteristics, objectively corresponding to the moral words that we use, that yesterday’s theory was preoccupied with. This is, I think, to the good, in so far as it rests on the recognition that ethical words are not so precise in meaning as Sir David Ross, for example, would have them be, and that, moreover, far from being an event

<sup>1</sup> In *Philosophy* for January 1949.

or episode just occurring on occasions in a person's life, a moral judgement is nothing so well insulated or incapsulated as was thought, but has roots and connexions with an outlook or attitude to which the rest of his convictions and beliefs contribute, and, being practical and not theoretical, has something to do with an attitude of will. But it is a view, I think, that is also occasioned (though this is never explicitly stated) by a moral timidity or a fear of seeming to be dogmatic or naïve or intolerant. For behind it lies the awareness that, as one Professor lately diagnosed it, 'what is damned in Soho may be highly approved in Samoa' or nearer home.

The relativity of moral standards and the difficulty of arguing anybody in or out of them, the futility of 'evidence' (if such be possible) for or against them, and the consequent notion that moral standards are inbred or inculcated in non-rational ways—these are, of course, well-thumbed arguments for subjectivism in ethics, but they are, I think, particularly vivid in these days of disillusionment and of propaganda and counter-propaganda. Behind the contemporary situation, then, lies, I think, the belief, which other and independent reasons later come to justify, that the attitudes which control one's moral judgements are impermeable to anything that might be dignified with the name of reasons for having or not having them. They are not rational at all. Or, as Professor Ayer lately put it<sup>1</sup> in a slightly different way, why people have this or that moral attitude, why they respond favourably, that is, with (moral?) approval, to certain facts and unfavourably to others, is a matter for the sociologist to investigate. There is nothing further to be said. 'Asking whether the attitude that one has adopted is the right attitude comes down to asking whether one is prepared to stand by it. There can be no guarantee of its correctness, for nothing counts as a guarantee. Or rather, something may count for someone as a guarantee, but counting something as a guarantee is itself taking up a moral standpoint.'

A passage such as this is queerly but strongly reminiscent of Sartres. The overt preoccupations, however, are quite different. To see what these are may take us some way towards a clue to what may already appear to be a very odd and needlessly complicated situation in contemporary moral theory. Not all the younger philosophers are logical positivists by any means; some have advanced to a method that has been called therapeutic positivism; others are

<sup>1</sup> In *Horizon* for September 1949.



independent and eclectic. But logical positivism has introduced certain axioms, certain distinctions and ways of talking, that need to become familiar if we are to find our way about the writings and sayings of those who exercise most sway, through lectures and tuition, in the Universities.

Logical positivism is, if anything, still more dazzled by the natural sciences than was the empiricism of the eighteenth century. But it is much more sophisticated, and its originators were closely linked with the newer methods of mathematical logic. In consequence, two kinds of proposition are distinguished. There are 'synthetic' or informative statements, and these are about 'matters of fact'—they are, therefore, also called 'descriptive'—and they can be verified or refuted by observation, experiment, the evidence of the senses. There are also 'necessary' or 'analytic' propositions, like those of logic and mathematics, which cannot be so verified or refuted; but these are not informative or descriptive, and they are not about facts; they are tautologies and concern only the meanings of words or are prescriptive of the proper use of words. This distinction between propositions is intended to be exclusive; it amounts, therefore, to a criterion of meaningfulness. Or, to put it another way, it permits no concept of meaning except a new and radical one. For where, within these distinctions, do ethical propositions fall? Positivists no longer claim that these propositions are empirical, as, for instance, a statement about one's own feelings of 'approval' (say), whatever that may be, would be, and they are clearly not tautologous. They are, therefore, not really significant propositions at all; as propositions, they are, in the strict sense, meaningless, neither true nor false. Better say that they are not genuine propositions at all. They are not about 'facts'; they do not describe or communicate anything any more than does a metaphysical statement.

What, then, are they? In the first draft of the theory they were listed rather as ejaculations or expletives that expressed feelings of disgust or approval or remorse and the rest. This classification is now thought to be an over-simplification, so that now they are classed as statements indeed, but as peculiar statements, as emotive, non-descriptive statements. Being statements, they are not meaningless, but their meaning is peculiar. By implication they might be called, for courtesy, descriptive, in so far as 'You ought not to cheat' or 'Cheating is wrong' conveys that the speaker disapproves of cheating, and this is informative about the speaker.

But in so far as such a statement is not a statement like 'Shadows are coloured' but is distinctively ethical, it is not descriptive of anything but expresses—and evokes—an emotion. Its meaning, therefore, is emotive, for 'independent emotive meaning is the power of a word to arouse emotion independently of what it describes or names'. Or, to use the comprehensive and portmanteau word that is now current, an ethical statement expresses (and evokes, for 'the ethical attitudes are practical, active, militant') an attitude. It is not strictly either true or false, although since it is, in a queer way, meaningful, it can, in a queer way, be agreed or disagreed with. Such agreement or disagreement is not intellectual but emotional; it is an agreement or disagreement between 'attitudes'.

So runs the doctrine as it concerns ethics. It is a special form of what in the history of thought has been called ethical subjectivism, emotive subjectivism. But am I too crass in calling it, simply and straightforwardly, a doctrine? Is it only an advocacy of an alternative language that is recommended because it will turn out to be useful for certain purposes but is itself, as Mr. John Wisdom might comment, to be used with great care and handled with green fingers, lest it produce needless puzzles and paradoxes of its own and outlive the utility that it may have in calling attention to certain features that an objectivist way of talking, the manner of yesterday, neglected or distorted? If it is a doctrine, it can be tackled, as of late it has often been in the philosophical periodicals. If it is simply a therapeutic recommendation of another way of talking, or proffered as a commentary on the facts and not as a translation of the facts, then it is more difficult to come to grips with. It may be too well oiled, or there may be too little to grip. Sometimes, indeed, it is almost as if a man should say, 'Of course, things are not like that, but it is useful to talk as if they were.'

But to ask whether a *prima facie*, and rather peremptory, account of what one is doing and not doing, when one says that 'Cheating is wrong', is really intended to be asserting anything about the facts, or, on the other hand, is simply urged as another way of talking about facts about which everybody is in agreement, is on the face of it to be asking a peculiar question. Yet a subjectivist will plead with an objectivist (and an intuitionist) that there is no need for worry, since they are both of them at bottom in agreement: they are merely talking about the same familiar things in somewhat different ways, and both ways are in order. There are,

indeed, some philosophers who hold such a view as I have outlined and, for all that they insist that the emotive effect of ethical sentences cannot be reproduced by any alleged equivalents and that the search for equivalents and translations should be abandoned, none the less freely admit that 'there is a pervasive tendency to error in our ordinary language' and that 'we are habitually deceived in our use of ethical language'. For such philosophers ethical subjectivism is, I think, a doctrine and theory in the old meaning of the word: it claims to be true in a plain sense of the word 'true', and it claims to 'refute' other theories; and what is offered as a logical analysis of our language—and everything is so offered at the moment—is not an analysis of the ordinary language that we in fact use but of the language that on the theory we ought to be using or, rather, the meaning that on the theory we ought to be assigning to our language. On the other hand, other philosophers, or the same philosophers in other moods, are in appearance more modest. 'I say that there are such things as moral obligations. In saying that . . . I am not also trying to describe the world. I am doing the same sort of thing as when at my marriage I promised to cherish my wife, and not the same sort of thing as when I say there is meadow-sweet in England.'<sup>1</sup>

These philosophers will repeat that thinkers who have denied that there are 'objective moral values' and who adopt an emotivist theory of the kind that I have outlined are not for a moment denying that such and such ways of acting are right or wrong and that we can know them to be so: 'they have wanted to emphasize the way in which "Promise-keeping is right" resembles "Going abroad is exciting", "Stories about mothers-in-law are comic", "Bombs are terrifying", and differs from "Roses are red" and "Sea-water is salt".' So we find that even Professor Ayer, who will commit himself to a doctrine in a manner in which Mr. John Wisdom and other disciples of Professor Wittgenstein could hardly dream of doing, will borrow something of the Wisdom idiom and will not only commend to us, as he did in last September's issue of *Horizon*, the adage that 'every kind of statement has its own sort of logic' but will reassure us that 'theological and ethical statements are no longer stigmatized as false or meaningless. They are merely said to be different from scientific statements. They are differently related to their evidence; or rather, a different meaning is attached to "evidence" in their case.' He goes on to say that

<sup>1</sup> From a paper in the Aristotelian Society's Supplementary Volume for 1948.

what, in the case of ethics, this amounts to is that ethical statements may very well be *sui generis*, and that to declare them not descriptive and not about anything is simply to declare that they are not about 'facts' as a scientific statement is about facts or a statement of sense perception is. He admits that to call them non-descriptive or to say that they are not statements and so cannot be true or false 'is, in an obvious sense, incorrect'; he thinks, however, that it is a way of talking that brings out certain points more clearly and delivers us from the misleadingness of the older way of talking. But 'if someone still wishes to say that ethical statements are statements of fact, only it is a queer sort of fact, he is welcome to do so. So long as he accepts my grounds for saying that they are not statements of fact, it is simply a question of how widely or loosely we want to use the word "fact". The only relevant consideration is one of clarity.'

If this passage is a clue, it is plain that it is a philosopher who is speaking. The emotivist theory is recommended as a therapy for certain sorts of malaise, the headaches of philosophers, like questions about the 'status' of objective 'non-natural characteristics', whether goodness or rightness is indefinable, and so on, the questions that arose from yesterday's family of theories. It is a remedy for the headache, above all, of that kind of knowledge for which there is no room in the logical positivist scheme of things, the so-called synthetic *a priori* proposition; for clearly, in the distinction of synthetic and analytic propositions that I indicated earlier, the proposition 'I ought not to cheat' cannot fit anywhere: it is not tautologous; it is not about anything that is, nor about anything that can be inspected publicly. In the positivist outlook, therefore, such a proposition is an epistemological monstrosity. It is a sham: it cannot express any knowledge, for there can be, according to this empiricist doctrine, no such knowledge. It is a philosopher, too, who advocates the emotivist idiom as a means of underlining some important features, as that, for example, 'I ought to tell the truth' is a different *sort* of statement from 'I like chocolate'. For it is to be doubted whether a non-philosopher needs to have his attention drawn to this dissimilarity. But indeed it is a curiosity of some of our contemporaries that, though purporting to start their thinking from an analysis of ordinary language and to be respectful of common-sense and tough only on mystagogic nonsense, none the less they do in the event turn out to be entertaining the most astonishing notions of the simple-mindedness and folly of the ordinary language-user.

Perhaps the truth is that they try to have their cake and eat it. 'If Professor Ayer is not in charge of the Ministry of Philosophical Rationing,' as a fellow-philosopher has commented, 'he is at least one of its most effective Public Relations officers.' We are, I think, being told not to worry about novel theories that recommend surprising (and, the ordinary user of language will think, corrosive) ways of talking; we shall get adjusted and everything will go on as before; nobody is disputing the facts but only patiently trying to find out the least misleading ways of speaking about them. 'I am fairly confident,' writes Professor Ayer, 'that what we have here are two different ways of describing the same experiences.' On the other hand, we also find that it is considered naughty to talk in the manner in which all of us do talk who are not habituated to believe that no statement can be true or false, and therefore cannot be called a meaningful statement or said to be about anything, unless it is verifiable or refutable by the evidence of the senses or by introspection or by scientific observation. We find that we can hardly declare what we intelligibly have in mind and mean without committing an intellectual nuisance. If in the interests of stressing (does it need to be?) that ethical statements are not like scientific ones the word 'objective' is to be restricted to matters of observation or introspection, and statements not about such matters are not to be called descriptive at all or talked of as informative of anything, and it is taboo to call them true or false, then our vocabularies are being cut by the Ministry even more severely than our pockets. Intelligibility is too austere restricted.

But there is more to it. Language is an obdurate and sensitive old lady; she has a revenge when ordinary meanings of words are put among the junk in the lumber-room. If an ethical statement is declared not to be about anything but, *qua* ethical, to be emotive, expressive or evocative of an emotion or attitude, neither true nor false except in the sense of encountering emotional acquiescence or resistance, then a subjectivist should not with propriety be surprised and resentful if his critics understand him according to the ordinary idiom of our language, and thereupon argue that he is talking according to a doctrine, and that this doctrine does not at all free us from misleading expressions or direct our attention to important features of morals that we habitually slur over or neglect or get wrong, but on the contrary systematically proceeds to do the very opposite. For we are landed in ethical bewilderment, and this through a language that is supposed to be rectifying, in an



ethically neutral analysis, the logical behaviour of the concepts that we habitually and heedfully use, the facts not being in question. If our attention is directed to anything, the critic may well continue, it is to an important feature of modern analytical philosophy, the blandness with which, to all appearances, it subverts the concepts that it sets out to re-allocate to their proper categories, declaring that we cannot really think what all the time we do in fact think and, as in this case, making out that opposing moral views are entirely non-rational disagreements in attitude that can only be reconciled, if the parties are in agreement about the facts but evaluate them differently, by playing, directly or indirectly, by persuasive or minatory language, by propaganda, by one technique or another, on our emotional responses to words.

It may be that Bishop Butler was right and that it is not at all important whether we know what right and wrong are, and what things are right and wrong, through 'a sentiment of the understanding or a perception of the heart' or through both together; but Butler has, as he said, the 'greatest part of common language and of common behaviour over the world' on his side, when he claims that in these matters we do know and are not simply evincing attitudes about which there is little more to be said than that we have them, and that their further consideration is the business of the psychologist and the sociologist.

But common language, sensitive as emotivists claim to be to its complexities and vaguenesses and subtleties, and rightly critical as they are of yesterday's attempts to dragoon it and to tidy it up in a passion of neatness, has seldom been allowed to stand in the way of emotivist doctrine. An ethical statement is allowed to be *sui generis* in so far as it is expressive (and evocative) of an emotion or feeling. But it is not considered why it is that language expressive of moral emotion is not, as would be agreed, translatable into language expressive of other emotions, any more than it is examined how there comes to be a difference between different sorts of disapproval—a man may dislike both the cinema and a habit of deception. Or an ethical statement may be classed as a crypto-imperative. But how does it come about that there is a wide range of ethical words that should be eliminated if ethical propositions are really imperatives? How is it that there is a language for saying 'You ought to meet the train now', if what is meant is 'Get out and meet it now' or 'I in fact approve of meeting trains on time; feel as I feel, and be off to meet it'. Or if the imperative version is not



offered as a translation of the sentence that contains the 'ought', in what way does it throw light on its meaning as a good commentary throws light on a difficult passage?

It is well to be shy of 'occult faculties' and of mysterious mental operations like 'synthetic *a priori* judgements', but not so well if the alternative is a still more perplexing, and this time arbitrary, mystery; for it would be that sort of mystery if we were commonly and meaningfully using a distinctively ethical terminology, quite different from that of taste or command, about which, however, mankind has until now been mistaken and for which there is really no proper employment—for it would be improper to go on using it as an instrument of stronger persuasion, as it is alleged to be, when once we had come to see that we were systematically mistaken about what we meant by it; indeed, I doubt if it could be done.

In the most thorough-going treatment of ethical emotivism so far, that of Professor Charles Stevenson in his influential *Ethics and Language*, the method of analysis is intended to be a quite neutral exhibition, without presuppositions or evaluations, of what we mean by the ordinary language that we use in the ordinary contexts in which we use it; but moral judgements are analysed as, in their distinctively ethical aspects, expressions of an attitude (a conveniently vague word) coupled with a disguised injunction to share it. 'So-and-so is a thoroughly bad man' means 'I completely disapprove of him; disapprove yourself, too'. He has recognized it as a serious difficulty in subjectivism (a difficulty that is not always squarely faced) that it makes anybody's approvals as valid as anybody else's. To the expressive function of ethical statements he adds, therefore, an evocative function, a persuasive or imperative one. Thereby, he thinks, we are out of 'moral chaos', because emotive meaning, being also evocative, has the effect of 'provoking or reconciling disagreement in attitude'. 'The emotive force may be tentative. It may be used not to sway the hearer without more ado, but rather with the hope of occasioning a counter-influence which will lead to mutual self-criticism and joint deliberation.' But we are none the less still in a chaos of different attitudes and persuasions, and without any reason why the reconciliation or provocation of disagreement is always a good thing. And surely we are in the realms of fantasy. And given that it is the meaning of our ordinary speech that is ostensibly being displayed to us, we are being befuddled. 'Sir, if you believe that, you will believe any-

thing.' As a good critic of Stevenson has written, 'To have to find the solution of the worst problems of subjectivism in attributing to the utterer of the ethical sentence an expectation or a hope which is wholly irrelevant and which he would be unlikely to entertain except by the rarest accident is surely a *reductio ad absurdum* of this gallant (and unique) attempt to face the music. . . . I imagined earlier in this paper the fate of a subjectivist's offer to Mr. Churchill. Let him now try to persuade Mr. Churchill that when he said "Hitler is a bad man" he was hoping to arouse (in Hitler, let us say, or Dr. Goebbels) a counter-influence which would result in mutual self-criticism and joint enlightenment.'<sup>1</sup>

The fact is that subjectivism and emotivism fail as translations of ethical sentences. Some philosophers are well aware of this, and disarm criticism by insisting that they are not attempting to translate such sentences into sentences of other logical types; as they rightly say, it cannot be done, and to suppose that it could is the mistake of the older sort of empiricism and of the modern 'tough metaphysics of reduction'. What, then, are they doing? Are they doing anything so vulgar as the impossible feat of eating the cake and keeping it? For it is doubtful what utility emotivism and subjectivism have as commentaries on the language that we use. They 'warn you that the only access to the moral world is through remorse and approval and so on; just as the only access to the world of comedy is through laughter; and the only access to the coward's world is through fear'. But they are very complicated ways of doing this, if this is in fact what they are doing and if it needs to be done. Commentaries are intended to elucidate texts, not to declare what clarity the text would have if it were a different and unrecognizable one, still less to make out that this different text is what the original text all the time 'really' is.

In fact, commentaries are usually intended to help decipher or clarify meanings, and we know how to judge whether or not they are successful. Sometimes, quite rightly, they use paraphrase. And we find, to repeat, that contemporary philosophers are concerned, they say, to elucidate to us what we mean by the sentences, ethical or otherwise, that we utter. As with other commentaries, we know how to judge whether the elucidation is successful; if, on reflexion, we have to say 'No, this elucidation does not render what I mean at all, but something quite different', the analyst must in consistency try again. Or if he protests that we 'really'

<sup>1</sup> From a paper by Mr. J. D. Mabbott in the *Aristotelian Society's Proceedings* for 1949.

mean and think what he says that we do and that we 'cannot' mean what we think we do, we are entitled to suspect a concealed metaphysician of a familiar type, or a man with a programme and a doctrine.

Now, whatever be the difficulties of objectivism or objectivist epistemology in ethics, whatever be the peculiarities of ethical argument, that propel these philosophers into the now popular emotivism—and it is worth remarking that by objectivism they mean a very special type of ethical theory that did not see the light till 1903—it is surely manifest that, short of being bullied or befuddled into it, no user of ethical sentences without an axe to grind would accept an emotivist analysis of these sentences as an elucidation of his meaning. We have imagined what Mr. Churchill would rejoin to the consultant philosopher who sought to clarify his mind along emotivist lines. But this is not all. To single out their emotive employment as *the* characteristic of ethical sentences and thereupon to declare that the *meaning* of such sentences is emotive, is to commit a couple of rather gross mistakes. It is to muddle the meaning of a sentence with the purpose, say, for which it is uttered or the mood that it manifests, and it is to overlook that emotive use is not confined to ethical sentences. A moral judgement may (but equally it may not) manifest an emotional or psychological state or be intended to persuade a man to a point of view—and thousands of non-ethical statements as we make them are in the same condition—but what I mean when I say something with a persuasive intent or to evince a sentiment is not altered when I say it with no such intent but neutrally. 'It's time for breakfast' does not become an emotive, non-descriptive proposition because it is emotively used and intended.

It is not my concern, however, to raise objections to the current variety of subjectivism; rather is it to attempt a description that will put the phenomenon in a context, and to suggest a diagnosis. Such brief description and diagnosis that from one angle or another I have offered will appear, as it is, not only incomplete but vague. (No doubt, too, the effort to be brief has failed to do full justice to the complexities of today's situation.) But can one give a precise anatomy of what is itself essentially vague? In its ethical use language is said to evince and evoke feelings and emotions. But there are emotions and emotions. Or to express and evoke attitudes. But of this comprehensive and serviceable word no careful account has yet been elaborated or even suggested. We can say

only that the attitudes in question are not, as it might be more promising to construe them, attitudes of will; they appear to be sets of related emotions. 'Approval' is another word of comparable vagueness that is left well alone, ambiguous as it is—it is susceptible of at least four meanings. Both meaning and truth are re-defined in the new theory without its being made clear what is being done, a procedure which, as I have complained, is both characteristic and perplexing in today's analytical manner. Ambiguities, however, usually give a helping hand to plausibility. But we have seen reason to believe that the procedure is very much according to a theory about knowledge and a programme, and that it is the empiricist programme, in its modern form, that generates the distinction of descriptive and emotive proposition or language, and draws the consequence that emotive language, not being about anything, is strictly neither true nor false but is the expression and evocation of an attitude that we have been brought up in or have adopted for reasons that are not reasons at all but psychological causes.

As we should expect, a theory like this is a philosophers' story. It is another version, on empiricist lines, of a fallacy common to empiricists and rationalists alike. This is the fallacy of thinking that there is, or must be, some one archetypal model of clarity or certainty or assurance, some one paradigm of knowledge, some one ideal type of proposition into which other *prima facie* different types can be translated and must in principle be translatable if clarity or certainty or even sense is to be had from them. What comes up to standard, the measure of the model, or conforms to the paradigm or is translatable in terms of the chosen type of proposition, is respectable; it gives 'real' knowledge or clarity or certainty or intelligible meaning. What will not conform and cannot be stretched to conform is not respectable; it is a poor relation or a sham.

Mr. Isaiah Berlin has lately been scrutinizing this fallacy.<sup>1</sup> The empiricist or 'deflationary' version of it he contrasts, as the two sides of the one coin, with the 'inflationary' version in which supra-sensible entities are multiplied to correspond to the multiple kinds of proposition and of words, and, as he says of it, 'the deflationary method gave the impression that only "good" propositions stood, as it were, face to face with the real world; all others were forms of squinting at it from the side, or of purblindness, or indeed, in extreme cases, of total blindness'. Ethical propositions

<sup>1</sup> In a paper read to the Aristotelian Society in June 1950.

are, as we have seen, not 'good' propositions; they do not conform to the ideal empiricist pattern of what a statement that deserves the name should be like; they are not scientific statements. What more natural, then, than that they should be banished to the non-descriptive realm of propositions that impart no information and do not mean what we are all sure they do in fact intelligibly mean. As non-descriptive, what can they be but emotive—'a kind of linguistic slag-heap from which the precious ore has been extracted—useful enough in some respects, and more than this, perhaps biologically or psychologically indispensable, but liable to land us in metaphysical or theological confusions if we mistake it for an informative or fact-affirming use of words'?

The theory, then, is a philosophers' story, and is in the strict sense reactionary, that is, it is parasitic on what it is concerned to deny. In this case, what it is denying is propositions that are neither tautologous nor empirical, and, in particular, ethical 'non-natural' entities or characteristics that are, it was claimed, 'inherent' in situations or actions and perceptible to the Inner Eye, characteristics that are the objective correlates of the many ethical distinctions that we draw. In other words, what is denied by the emotivist theory is, in part, a certain form of objectivism whose parentage is hardly older than G. E. Moore and H. H. Prichard, and whose champions are philosophers like Sir David Ross and Mr. E. F. Carritt and whose present most diligent defender is Dr. A. C. Ewing.

These men did fine critical work, but one result of it was, as I have said, the injection of an extreme intellectualism and a disturbing dullness and unreality, an almost stifling abstractness, into ethical theorizing. Their typical examinations of ethical judgement have been compared, not unfairly, to a police surgeon's attempts to identify a corpse. The present swing could have been forecast, and was in this REVIEW, several years ago. From extreme abstractness and intellectualism an equally extreme emotionalism is a natural enough reaction. In itself, it is not altogether a bad thing—or it would not be if it were simply that. It is all the more natural when one reflects that, in more than one respect, yesterday's objectivism and today's subjectivism are but the two sides of the one coin.

Prichard's germinating essay of 1912 was entitled 'Does moral philosophy rest on a mistake?' and the method that, with Moore's *Principia Ethica* of 1903, he inaugurated was in essence as positivist as the method of today. It was more obviously respectable, how-



ever, for he and his disciples worked in more settled and less disillusioned times; nor were they empiricists boldly concerned to carry through a radical programme: they found no trouble or anxious headaches in saying that we could know what was not evident to the senses or matter-of-fact; in spite of a Cartesian ideal, they were not, then, obsessed with epistemological horrors that refused to be squeezed into their theory of knowledge.

The nineteenth and the beginning of this century were on the whole robust about morality, too robust, and too confident that it made no difference to morality whatever else you were, whether you were Christian or atheist, liberal or communist. Our confidence has, happily, worn rather thin, and we are not at all robust. The other day, in a lecture broadcast in translation, M. Maritain was arguing the meaning of contemporary atheism. He thought that serious atheism had this consequence among others, that it entailed the persistent effort to cut away within oneself any and every 'natural idea of absolute values or the attention that these naturally attract or any metaphysical anxiety whatever', for to cut away these is to smooth out or eliminate the traces of the transcendence that has so far not been abolished.

An English thinker could hardly commit himself to such an opinion without being shockingly unconventional. In England we are gentler, and naturally and rightly more careful of such diagnoses, and more cautious of provoking the response that we are loading our gloves with lead. Even so, an English Professor of Philosophy at Durham has been unconventional enough to suggest this same diagnosis.

It is no less in bad taste, and it needs no less caution (it can be done too freely), to argue that subjectivism discredits morality; subjectivists are apt to forestall this charge, emotively, by calling it a 'quiet threat'. The theory, as Professor Ayer writes, is on the level of analysis; it is an attempt to show what people are doing when they make moral judgements; it is, therefore, neutral about actual conduct. 'To analyse moral judgements is not itself to moralize', as philosophers of yesterday, too, would agree. The emotivist analysis, then, does not entail that what anybody thinks right is right. 'On my analysis, to say that something which somebody thinks right is right is to range oneself on his side, to adhere to that particular standpoint, and certainly I do not adhere to every standpoint whatever. I adhere to some and not to others, like everybody who has any moral views at all.' A moral judgement,



then, is a decision, not characterizable as true or false. But Hitler decided one thing about concentration camps, and we decide another. And who decides between us? For any preference, any further moral judgement that Hitler was wrong and we are right, is a further decision made, presumably, by somebody, or else it is shouting louder of our own previous decision. However this may be, it can hardly be claimed either that such an analyst as Professor Ayer and the ordinary man whose language he professes to elucidate are saying the same thing in different terminologies, or that the analyst is quite as ethically neutral as he thinks and would sincerely like to be.

In fact, of course, Professor Ayer's philosophizing, like that of any other philosopher, is shaped by a quite definite outlook, and this he has from time to time expounded with characteristic lucidity and force. 'For those to whom it is intolerable that facts should be contingent, that things should just happen to be as they are, it is also likely to be intolerable that the choice of values should rest ultimately with themselves. They may not need religious sanctions in order to observe the ordinary social rules of morality, but unless they do feel that life has some meaning in itself they are inclined to feel that everything they do is trivial and that all conduct, including moral conduct, is arbitrary. What they obtain from religion is not the answer to their question concerning the meaning of life, but only, here again, the fallacious assurance that there is an answer. If they were satisfied with their own values, if they found life meaningful as they actually lived it, they would not need this assurance.'<sup>1</sup> The same outlook was communicated to UNESCO at its opening session in 1946.

From this lecture we again gather that to ask whether, say, restraint of non-conformist opinion is wrong is not a question that can be answered as we might have thought; it is a question to which we can only choose to give a practical answer—that is, presumably, we can choose to regard it as wrong. It is a most curious (and Sartrean) sense of the word 'choice'. 'In the last resort, therefore, each individual has the responsibility of choice (of values); and it is a responsibility that is not to be escaped. . . . The question how men ought to live is one to which there is no authoritative answer (i.e. no answer at all). It has to be decided by each man for himself.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From an essay in the *Partisan Review* for March 1950.

<sup>2</sup> The lecture was published in *Polemic* for March 1947 and in *Reflections on our Age*.

Perhaps after all M. Sartres is hardly more explicit or more aware of what he is doing. But Professor Ayer is exceptional in his lucidity, and this is why I have quoted him at disproportionate length. By and large, the English order things differently. Over here, to the credit of their hearts if not of their heads, moral subjectivists do not always succeed in keeping their subjectivism chemically pure. Even Professor Stevenson can assume that an agreement in attitudes that is 'enlightened' is better than one that is not. Moral decisions, they say, may be 'better or worse'; some attitudes may spring from a 'more developed moral sensibility' than others. But in language such as this philosophers are either intruding purely personal preferences into a neutral analysis that should exclude them, or else they are unconsciously assuming some objective standard of goodness. The truth is that it is as hard to rid oneself of the objectivist illusion as it is to explain it. In fact, an emotivist will agree that ethical statements have the particularly strong persuasive force that they are alleged to have because of the greater authority of 'the objectivist language'. In this respect, as in others, the theory borrows much of its plausibility from our inability to disinfect ourselves of the objectivist implications of our language that yet are pronounced to be mistakes or illusions.

If today's moral philosophy is analytic, it does not analyse what we think but what we would think if we thought differently. Its notion of people's real meaning has aptly and justly been compared to the Hegelian notion of real will, 'a will which I never really will because I do not know it and could not recognize it if it were set before me'. If it is intended to be therapeutic, or to sharpen the tools of language and to alleviate our problems and anxieties, it appears to fail. Instead of clarity we have confusions and systematic ambiguities (as in the word 'approval' or 'attitude') that would not have been tolerated by an older generation of philosophers and from which, instead, the theory—or therapy—borrows more of its plausibility. Instead of dissipations of mental headaches, we have bewilderment. As it is, the therapy that it appears to practise and the economies that it claims to effect are possible only because the patient cannot be cured or cleansed of the objectivist implications of his endemic ways of talking about morals. The disease may be serious; the cure gives no relief. It would be deadly if it could.

# IS INTEGRITY ENOUGH?

## A Study of George Orwell

By T. A. BIRRELL

*'Who is this?' roared the Judge.*

*'A crusader who lost his cross,' said the Prosecutor.*

*'A crusader in search of a cross,' said the Defender.*

ARTHUR KOESTLER: *Arrival and Departure.*

ONE of the first difficulties that one meets with when trying to assess Orwell's significance is that of deciding what exactly to call him. To call him a novelist, or a critic, or a sociologist, would be to imply that his achievement lay in one or other of those fields, and yet his contribution to any particular one of them has hardly been sufficient to warrant any detailed appraisal. The general epithet 'man of letters' conveys the suggestion of an elegant essayist, and is hardly a term to apply to Orwell, who cared only for what he was saying, and not at all for how he said it. I do not know how Orwell described himself in *Who's Who* (if he ever attained that eminence), but if I were asked to try to classify him, I should say that he was 'a good left-wing journalist'. For Orwell's claim to our attention and respect does not rest on any or all of his actual output. Orwell's achievement lies not in what he did or said, but in what he was. He was a professional left-wing journalist to whom, at the end of his life, could still be applied such terms as honesty, sincerity, and integrity.

Although his last two books achieved a wide sale, Orwell never really achieved popularity. His reading public was the English left-wing intelligentsia, and yet, for such a public, Orwell never sacrificed integrity for 'orthodoxy'. In political doctrines and in personal attitudes Orwell by no means belonged to the conventional picture of the English 'left'. Yet the fact that he had to find his audience there, that, at all events, he did get some sort of a

hearing, prompts the consideration that perhaps there is something wrong with the conventional picture.

Orwell might be described as one of the last of the English Radicals—though perhaps the species will always exist, for Radicalism seems to be a constantly recurring feature of English culture. We find it in Langland, in Bunyan and the Dissenting tradition, in Cobbett, in Dickens, in Chesterton, and, though mixed with non-indigenous elements, in the I.L.P.

What is the common element in such a wide range of examples? Primarily, I think, a desire to utter unpleasant truths, both because they are true, *and* because they are unpleasant. English Radicalism springs from an emotional necessity—a desire to swim *against* the tide, to jolt the complacent and to shock the smug, to say things that ought to be said and that nobody else seems to be saying. The English respect for minority opinions is not so much a respect for the abstract principle of the rights of minorities, but an empirical knowledge that minority opinions are more likely to be good ones.

English Radicalism is both revolutionary and conservative. It is revolutionary because it will refuse to compromise with the political or social evil that it attacks; because it will not recognize that any evil system, however permanent in appearance, should be allowed to persist solely on the grounds of social stability; because it concerns itself wholly with ends, and lets the means look after themselves. It is conservative, because it is not based on any pre-conceived social theory, but on the traditional concepts of natural justice, on a concern for the rights of the individual and his family, on a desire to respect and preserve elemental human dignity and decency.

The English Radicals have all been men of outstanding personality—in fact there is a danger of confusing the English Radical with the English Eccentric. But there cannot be leaders of opinion without followers, and the English Radical tradition has always had its followers, though not often very many. And what many English Catholics, who see left-wing politics from the standpoint of J. B. Morton or Colm Brogan, fail to realize is that the popular inspiration of English Radicalism, even in its modern forms, is primarily Christian. Although, after Cobbett, the professed beliefs of the leaders of English Radicalism have usually been agnostic, yet it is the basis of Christian tradition behind the movement that ensures its support, and, perhaps only unconsciously, permeates

the teaching of its leaders. Its crusading impulse, its pride in being a minority view, derives from St. Paul, and its social ethics, its belief in the brotherhood of man and the dignity of the poor and the downtrodden, is a groping towards the fulfilment of the Sermon on the Mount.

This fundamental Christian inspiration behind our radical thinkers and writers has already been pointed out by Maritain in his *Christianity and Democracy* and *The Rights of Man*, but there are not many signs of the practical acceptance of his thesis. There is, on the contrary, a danger that when we talk of a 'Catholic point of view' we mean simply the accidental mental outlook which happens to be shared by a number of English Catholics of similar education and social background, and that, especially on political topics, we invoke 'Catholic principles' in support of personal prejudice. We tend to judge our non-Catholic contemporaries by a set of standards which could not, in the nature of their environment, ever be applicable to them. If the bath water looks a little scummy, out it goes, with never a glance to see if the baby's in it. Unlike the Communists, we seem to feel embarrassed by the support of 'fellow travellers', and so long as that is the case, the non-Catholic writer of goodwill and integrity will seek to find his audience among the readers of the *New Statesman* and *Horizon*. But there is no reason why, at least in Chestertonian geography, one should not travel the path to Rome by way of the road to Wigan Pier.

Like all the English Radicals, Orwell is not a doctrinaire political thinker: it is almost impossible to extract a system from his works, or even clearly to define his positive opinions. We find instead a kind of running commentary on contemporary left-wing politics, a personal adaptation of whatever 'advanced opinions' are in the air. And when we try to get a total impression, all we can see is a series of platforms, rather than a complete political structure. Orwell's love for his fellow man, his concern for decency and integrity in human life, resolves itself, for his propagandist purposes, into hatred of power—hatred of military power, hatred of police power, hatred of money power. And hatred and love are very personal criteria—they are hardly the professed starting point of the political doctrinaire. Orwell belongs, in fact, to the end of the Protestant liberal tradition, rather than to any form of modern Socialism. If he calls himself a Socialist, it is in terms of the Socialism of the English working classes:

To the ordinary working man, the sort you would meet in any pub on Saturday night, Socialism does not mean much more than better wages and shorter hours and nobody bossing you about. To the more revolutionary type, the type who is a hunger-marcher and is blacklisted by employers, the word is a sort of rallying-cry against the forces of oppression, a vague threat of future violence. But, so far as my experience goes, no genuine working man grasps the deeper implications of Socialism. Often, in my opinion, he is a truer Socialist than the orthodox Marxist, because he does remember, what the other so often forgets, that Socialism means justice and common decency.<sup>1</sup>

Orwell's attitude on 'imperialism', for example, is another refreshing contrast to the sentimental insincerity of the doctrinaire left-wing:

The high standard of life we enjoy in England depends upon our keeping a tight hold on the Empire, particularly the tropical portions of it such as India and Africa . . . The alternative is to throw the Empire overboard and reduce England to a cold and unimportant little island where we should all have to work very hard and live mainly on herrings and potatoes. That is the very last thing that any left-winger wants. Yet the left-winger continues to feel that he has no moral responsibility for imperialism. He is perfectly ready to accept the products of Empire and to save his soul by sneering at the people who hold the Empire together.<sup>2</sup>

To Orwell's hatreds may be added a hatred of orthodoxy, of 'all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls',<sup>3</sup> and among which, we presume, he includes Roman Catholicism together with doctrinaire Marxism. Orwell's achievements, and his limitations, are all at a personal level. He is a perfect 'inner light'-er, and his remarks on Dickens might well be taken as an appreciation of himself: 'a man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened . . . a man who is *generously angry* . . . a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence . . .'<sup>4</sup>

The deficiencies of Protestant liberalism, the good pagan's failure, can be, and frequently have been, indicated in general terms. But the assets and defects of the liberal standpoint need to be worked out in terms of the individual concerned, and Orwell provides an extremely worthwhile case. His undoubted qualities, his generosity and integrity, are inextricably linked with what can

<sup>1</sup> *The Road to Wigan Pier*, 1937, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> *Critical Essays*, 1946, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.



only be called his personal neuroses. Orwell's dominant concern is to find a place for himself in society—the mainspring of his work is to find an honest political outlook for a person of just *his* particular environment, education, beliefs and emotions. The desire to fit this one square peg into the framework of existence, and to demand everyone else's attention while he does so, is, with Orwell, almost an obsession. It is the old Romantic pose, the defiant gesture and the bleeding heart, only the unrequited love for which Orwell's heart is bleeding is the love for his fellow man. Suffering and poverty are for him a personal challenge—he feels a compulsion to rationalize and to justify his own co-existence with human misery.

To try to bring out the mixture of personal integrity and the almost neurotic element in Orwell's work, it will be necessary to discuss a few specimens of each type of his books, though the categories are not, in fact, mutually exclusive.

Of Orwell's sociological reportage, we may take two examples, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937). Orwell was constantly concerned with the problems of class-prejudice, with a desire to escape from the limitations and restrictions imposed by his own type of education and environment. Orwell the old Etonian and former Burma police officer resented the unreal stratification of the English social system imposed by wealth and education. He grasped the essence of Chesterton's dictum that the Public Schools are not for the *sons* of gentlemen, but for the *fathers* of gentlemen—two generations does the trick. Therein lies Orwell's hatred of money power: money manifests itself socially in the educational system, the educational system creates class-consciousness, and class-consciousness prevents the natural fellowship between man and man. Orwell suffered from class-consciousness to an extent which makes it almost an obsession. His place in what he called the 'lower-upper-middle class' provoked in him mingled feelings of resentment and, above all, of guilt.

In the second part of *The Road to Wigan Pier* he tells how *Down and Out* came to be written. After five years as a member of the Indian Imperial Police, 'part of an evil despotism', he returned to England in 1927:

For five years I had been part of an oppressive system, and it had left me with a bad conscience. Innumerable remembered faces—

faces of prisoners in the dock, of men waiting in the condemned cells, of subordinates I had bullied and aged peasants I had snubbed, of servants and coolies I had hit with my fists in moments of rage (nearly everyone does these things in the East, at any rate occasionally: orientals can be very provoking)—haunted me intolerably. I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had got to expiate . . . I wanted to submerge myself, to get right down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against their tyrants . . . failure seemed to me to be the only virtue . . .

It was in this way that my thoughts turned towards the English working class . . . Once I had been among them and accepted by them, I should have touched bottom, and—this is what I felt: I was aware even then that it was irrational—part of my guilt would drop from me.<sup>1</sup>

The chief cause of his resentment of class-distinctions was the instinctive physical revulsion from the working classes which it caused:

Once when I was thirteen, I was in a train coming from a market town, and the third-class carriage was packed full of shepherds and pig-men who had been selling their beasts. Somebody had produced a quart bottle of beer and passed it round; it travelled from mouth to mouth, everyone taking a swig. I cannot describe the horror I felt as that bottle worked its way towards me. If I drank from it after those lower-class mouths I felt certain I should vomit; on the other hand, if they offered it to me I dared not refuse for fear of offending them—you see here how the middle-class squeamishness works both ways.<sup>2</sup>

So in these two books Orwell tries to achieve at least a sympathetic understanding of working-class life. In *Down and Out* he describes his life as a dishwasher in a Paris restaurant and as a tramp on the roads in England. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* he moves a little up the social scale to describe the miners' life in the depressed areas of the industrial north. In both books there is a marked absence of any glamourization of poverty in the *Stars Look Down* manner, and there are no impassioned outbursts for an Earthly Paradise. Orwell's sense of integrity always prevents him from losing his head: his comments are shrewd and sensible. He is the perfect reporter because he gives his *exact* physical and mental reactions to poverty and overwork: he does not try to record what he thinks he ought to have felt:

<sup>1</sup> *The Road to Wigan Pier*, pp. 180-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 162-3.

When you are approaching poverty, you make one discovery which outweighs some of the others. You discover boredom and mean complications and the beginnings of hunger, but you also discover the great redeeming feature of poverty: the fact that it annihilates the future. Within certain limits, it is actually true that the less money you have, the less you worry. When you have a hundred francs in the world you are liable to the most craven panics. When you have only three francs you are quite indifferent; for three francs will feed you till to-morrow, and you cannot think further than that. You are bored, but you are not afraid. You think vaguely, 'I shall be starving in a day or two—shocking, isn't it?' And then the mind wanders to other topics. A bread and margarine diet does, to some extent, provide its own anodyne.<sup>1</sup>

Besides the fatigue and precariousness of a Paris dishwasher's life, it is the dirt and the fundamental inefficiency of restaurant organization that concerns him:

It was amusing to look round the filthy little scullery and think that only a double door was between us and the dining-room. There sat the customers in all their splendour—spotless tablecloths, bowls of flowers, mirrors and gilt cornices and painted cherubim; and here, just a few feet away, we in our disgusting filth. For it really was disgusting filth. There was no time to sweep the floor till evening, and we slithered about in a compound of soapy water, lettuce-leaves, torn paper and trampled food. A dozen waiters with their coats off, showing their sweaty armpits, sat at the table mixing salads and sticking their thumbs into the cream pots. The room had a dirty, mixed smell of food and sweat. Everywhere in the cupboards, behind the piles of crockery, were squalid stores of food that the waiters had stolen. There were only two sinks, and no washing basin, and it was nothing unusual for a waiter to wash his face in the water in which clean crockery was rinsing. But the customers saw nothing of this.<sup>2</sup>

As a penniless tramp in London he notices for the first time how difficult it is to find anywhere to sit down without having to pay for it:

I had been in London innumerable times, and yet till that day I had never noticed one of the worst things about London—the fact that it costs money even to sit down. In Paris, if you had no money and could not find a public bench, you would sit on the pavement. Heaven knows what sitting on the pavement would lead to in London—prison, probably . . . We stood two hours on the street corner. It was unpleasant, but it taught me not to use the expression 'street corner loafer', so I gained something from it.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Down and Out in Paris and London* (2nd edn.), 1949, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 154-5.

He notes the difficulty of getting a full night's sleep in the dormitories of cheap lodging-houses, yet he prefers the *laissez faire* squalor of a private lodging house to the militaristic Pharisaism of the Salvation Army: 'The Salvation Army are so in the habit of thinking themselves a charitable body that they cannot even run a lodging-house without making it stink of charity.'<sup>1</sup>

What impresses most in *Down and Out* is Orwell's dispassionate desire to *learn*—he does not go amongst the poor looking for 'abuses' to remedy or proclaiming 'causes' to be championed. He writes with the hope and belief that physical contact with the poor will clarify his own attitude to human misery and suffering, he tries to consider the tramp and the beggar without the cant of class prejudice:

As a social type a beggar compares well with scores of others. He is honest compared with the sellers of most patent medicines, high-minded compared with a Sunday newspaper proprietor, amiable compared with a hire-purchase tout—in short, a parasite, but a fairly harmless parasite. He seldom extracts more than a bare living from the community, and, what should justify him according to our ethical ideas, he pays for it over and over in suffering . . . Why are beggars despised?—for they are despised, universally. I believe it is for the simple reason that they fail to earn a decent living. In practice nobody cares whether work is useful or useless, productive or parasitic; the sole thing demanded is that it shall be profitable. In all the modern talk about energy, efficiency, social service and the rest of it, what meaning is there except 'Get money, get it legally, and get a lot of it'? Money has become the grand test of virtue. By this test beggars fail, and for this they are despised. If one could earn even ten pounds a week at begging, it would become a respectable profession immediately.<sup>2</sup>

In *The Road to Wigan Pier* there is less simple reportage, and more of Orwell's attempt to formulate his own political philosophy. Having tried to overcome the obstacles of class-prejudice and to achieve a sympathetic understanding of the working classes, he goes on to insist that the basis of any 'genuinely revolutionary government' must consist of the combination of the 'sinking middle class' with the working class:

And then perhaps this misery of class-prejudice will fade away, and we of the sinking middle class—the private schoolmaster, the half-starved free-lance journalist, the colonel's spinster daughter

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 173-4.

with £75 a year, the jobless Cambridge graduate, the ship's officer without a ship, the clerks, the civil servants, the commercial travellers and the thrice-bankrupt drapers in the country towns—may sink without further struggles into the working class where we belong, and probably when we get there it will not be so dreadful as we feared, for, after all, we have nothing to lose but our aitches.<sup>1</sup>

It must be remembered that those words are thirteen years old, and that the financial position of the middle classes has declined even more perceptibly since then.

Socialism, as the tag in the textbook puts it, is like a hat that has lost its shape because everyone tries to wear it. Orwell's Socialism, and his 'genuinely revolutionary government' is very much his own highly personal version:

The job [he says] of the thinking person, is not to reject Socialism but to make up his mind to humanise it . . . Socialists have, so to speak, presented their case wrong side foremost. They have never made it sufficiently clear that the essential aims of Socialism are justice and liberty. With their eyes glued to economic facts, they have proceeded on the assumption that man has no soul, and explicitly or implicitly they have set up the goal of a materialistic Utopia.<sup>2</sup>

(Victor Gollancz thought it necessary to write a twelve-page preface to the Left Book Club version of *The Road to Wigan Pier* to explain to his members that Orwell wasn't strictly orthodox.) But though in a sense Orwell's Socialism, with its combination of middle- and working-class virtues, is for *him* a home-made version, in another sense it is the old English Radical tradition repeated in the twentieth century—a tradition that is as old as Langland.

His novels tell us almost more about Orwell than the explicitly autobiographical passages in *The Road to Wigan Pier*. The novels reveal the uncertainty, the fear, and the despair behind the 'open mind', the 'free intelligence'. Of course novels are not 'real life', but they are nearer to life than reportage, or statements of political theory. Orwell's novels show that his journalistic integrity, his concern for justice and decency, though admirable in themselves, are not enough to live by.

His first novel, *Burmese Days* (1934), is an adaptation to the Burmese scene of the same approach as Forster's *Passage to India*.

<sup>1</sup> *The Road to Wigan Pier*, p. 263.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 251 and 246.

The debt to Forster is obvious, but whereas Forster presents a balanced and mature work of art, Orwell is merely using the same sort of setting for the projection of his personal problems. The 'hero' of the story, or at least the character with whom our sympathies are supposed to lie, is Flory, the timber merchant in the Anglo-Indian (in the old sense of the word) community in the Burmese station. He is friendly with the local Indian doctor, and for that, and for his dislike of the despotic aspects of British Imperialism, cordially disliked by the other members of the European Club. Flory resents the rigid caste pressure of the Anglo-Indian community:

Free speech is unthinkable. All other kinds of freedom are permitted. You are free to be a drunkard, an idler, a coward, a back-biter, a fornicator; but you are not free to think for yourself. Your opinion on every subject of any conceivable importance is dictated for you by the pukka sahibs' code . . . The time comes when you burn with hatred of your own countrymen, when you long for a native rising to drown their Empire in blood. And in this there is nothing honourable, hardly even any sincerity. For, *au fond*, what do you care if the Indian Empire is a depotism, if Indians are bullied and exploited? You only care because the right of free speech is denied you. You are a creature of the despotism, a pukka sahib, tied tighter than a monk or a savage by an unbreakable system of tabus.<sup>1</sup>

Basically the theme of the book is the tragic failure of Flory the misfit, Flory the 'free intelligence'. He falls in love with a girl newly arrived at the station (we realize from the outset that she is hopelessly unsuitable) and is disgraced by a scheming Burmese magistrate who resents Flory's friendship with the Indian doctor. The girl rejects Flory after his disgrace, and in despair he commits suicide.

As if to heighten our sense of Flory's isolation, Orwell gives him a livid scar on his face, a birthmark, and a kind of overt symbol of that guilt consciousness that we noted in *The Road to Wigan Pier*. Yet what is remarkable is that, despite these insistent signals claiming our attention, Flory does not really engage our sympathies. J. C. Powys analyses well the general impression of the book when he says, 'The spirit of Mr. Orwell's book is in harmony with a very ancient doctrine—that it is better to be a dead dog than a live rat.'<sup>2</sup> The characters that are alive *are* the rats—

<sup>1</sup> *Burmese Days* (2nd edn.), 1949, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted on the dust-cover of the 1949 edition.



the rascally Burmese magistrate, the insufferable polo-playing police lieutenant (who nevertheless is always suffered), the scout-masterish Deputy Commissioner, and the 'all-Indians-are-niggers' plantation manager. Flory, in the nobility of his isolation, just can't survive. The scene where Flory's girl, Elizabeth, breaks with him after she learns that he has kept a Burmese mistress, is significant. (Flory is speaking):

'Though I'm not rich, at least I could make you a home. There's a way of living—civilised, decent—' 'Haven't we said enough?' she said more calmly. 'Will you let me go before somebody comes?' . . . It was not what he had done that horrified her. He might have committed a thousand abominations and she could have forgiven him. But not after that shameful, squalid scene, and the devilish ugliness of his disfigured face in that moment. It was, finally, the birthmark that had damned him.<sup>1</sup>

Flory's concern for 'a way of living, civilized, decent', appears as a kind of unavoidable social stigma, like his birthmark.

*Coming up for Air* (June 1939) is a more urgent, personal version of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, written on the eve of the 1939 war. The chief character is an insurance salesman, George Bowling, lower-middle-class, *l'homme moyen sensuel*, who decides to break away for a week from his life of a suburban frustration to revisit the country village where he was born, and, above all, to see once more the pool where he used to fish as a boy:

I've still got, I've always had, a peculiar feeling for fishing. You'll think it damned silly, no doubt, but I've actually half a wish to go fishing even now, when I'm fat and forty-five and got two kids and a house in the suburbs. Why? Because in a manner of speaking I *am* sentimental about my childhood—not my own particular childhood, but the civilisation which I grew up in and which is now, I suppose, just about at its last kick. And fishing is somehow typical of that civilisation. As soon as you think of fishing you think of things that don't belong to the modern world. The very idea of sitting all day under a willow tree beside a quiet pool—and being able to find a quiet pool to sit beside—belongs to the time before the war, before the radio, before aeroplanes, before Hitler. There's a kind of peacefulness even in the names of English coarse fish. Roach, rudd, dace, bleak, barbel, bream, gudgeon, pike, chub, carp, tench. They're solid kind of names. The people who made them up hadn't heard of machine-guns, they didn't live in terror of the sack or spend their time eating aspirins, going to the pictures and wondering how to keep out of the concentration camp.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Burmese Days*, p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> *Coming up for Air*, 1948 (3rd edn.), pp. 75-6.

But on his arrival at his home village, he finds his vision of the past rudely shattered. The village that he knew as a boy has been completely swallowed up by modern industrialism. Bowling's sheet-anchor was, as it were, his vision of the pre-1914 world:

What was it that people had in those days. A feeling of security even when they weren't secure. More exactly it was a feeling of continuity. All of them knew they'd got to die, and I suppose a few of them knew they were going to go bankrupt, but what they didn't know was that that order of things could change. Whatever might happen to themselves, things would go on as they'd known them.<sup>1</sup>

And now Bowling is left without even a sentimental nostalgia with which to face the future.

If Bowling is the lower-middle-class humanist, his friend Porteous, the old classics master, is the upper-middle-class humanist, a predecessor of Waugh's Scott-King. But Porteous's view of Modern Europe is for Bowling (and for Orwell) pathetically inadequate. Porteous's answer to Hitler is the *Ode to a Nightingale*:

I watched him leaning up against the bookshelf. Funny, these public-school chaps. Schoolboys all their days. Whole life revolving round the old school and their bits of Latin and Greek and poetry. And suddenly I remembered that almost the first time I was here with Porteous he'd read me the very same poem. Read it in just the same way, and his voice quivered when he got to the same bit—the bit about magic casements, or something. And a curious thought struck me. *He's dead*. He's a ghost. All people like that are dead . . . It's a ghastly thing that nearly all the decent people, the people who *don't* want to go round smashing faces in with spanners, are like that. They're decent, but their minds have stopped. They can't defend themselves against what's coming to them, because they can't see it, even when it's under their noses. They think that England will never change and that England's the whole world. Can't grasp that it's just a left-over, a tiny corner that the bombs happen to have missed. But what about the new kind of men from Eastern Europe, the stream-lined men who think in slogans and talk in bullets? They're on our track. Not long before they catch up with us. No Marquess of Queensberry rules for those boys. And all the decent people are paralysed. Dead men and live gorillas. Doesn't seem to be anything between.<sup>2</sup>

Orwell prefaces the book with the motto 'He's dead but he won't lie down.' He wanted to make the book an attempt to strip

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 162-3.

away the nostalgia for the past and for a time when the desire to live one's life in peace and decency wasn't considered to be a foolish and impossible day-dream. And yet the most vivid part of the book is precisely the evocation of Bowling's village childhood. In his anxiety to be rid of the dream-village, Orwell has it accidentally destroyed by a bomb, besides being swallowed up by other, less violent, forms of progress. So George Bowling can face 1939 at least without any illusions: Orwell's concern for integrity gets him only as far as that—his achievement is to have left Bowling in a state of numb fear and apprehension:

*It's all going to happen.* All the things you've got at the back of your mind, the things you're terrified of, the things that you tell yourself are just a nightmare or only happen in foreign countries. The bombs, the food-queues, the rubber truncheons, the barbed wire, the coloured shirts, the slogans, the enormous faces, the machine-guns squinting out of bedroom windows. It's all going to happen. I know it. There's no escape. Fight against it if you like, or look the other way and pretend not to notice, or grab your spanner and rush out to do a bit of face-smashing along with the others. But there's no way out. It's just something that's got to happen.<sup>1</sup>

The theme of the allegory *Animal Farm* (1945) is already well known. The animals on the farm, led by the pigs, start a revolution, and throw out the tyrant Man, Farmer Jones. The animals have two leaders, Snowball and Napoleon. For a time after the revolution all goes well, and it seems that the animals, having freed themselves from oppression, are well on the way to establishing their earthly paradise. However, Napoleon, with the aid of the dogs, stages a *coup d'état* and drives out his rival, Snowball. After Snowball's departure the rule of Napoleon and the pigs turns into tyranny. Soon the other animals find themselves more oppressed under Napoleon than under Man, and Napoleon and the pigs take on more and more the odious characteristics of Man. The book concludes when the pigs have taken to walking on two legs and have become almost indistinguishable from Man the oppressor. The parallels with the Russian revolution, the removal of Trotsky and the emergence of Stalin, are perfectly obvious. But what is not obvious is Orwell's own standpoint. In fact, he seems to be using the allegory to hide his own uncertainty of mind. Is he on the side of Snowball-Trotsky, is he the idealistic revolutionary, who believes that the revolution might have

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

succeeded but for the corruption of power in the hands of the Napoleon-Stalin party, or does his viewpoint coincide with that of the conservative-pessimism of Benjamin the donkey:

Old Benjamin, the donkey, seemed quite unchanged since the Rebellion. He did his work in the same slow obstinate way as he had done it in Jones's time, never shirking and never volunteering for extra work either. About the Rebellion and its results he would express no opinion. When asked whether he was not happier now that Jones was gone, he would say only 'Donkeys live a long time. None of you has ever seen a dead donkey', and the others had to be content with this cryptic answer.<sup>1</sup>

Benjamin lives on through all the phases of the revolution, and retains his embittered cynicism to the end. *Animal Farm* as a satire does not justify the extravagant claims that have been made for it, but it is interesting as indicating the conflict in Orwell between his revolutionary idealism and his desire to have the last word.

*Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, we now know, was written by a dying man. But the unrelieved despair, the complete revulsion from all that we mean by a belief in humanity, in human life, cannot be attributed to Orwell's final illness alone. The book represents the logical conclusion to Orwell's outlook—it is a picture of Flory-Bowling-Orwell, the free intelligence, the agnostic humanist, facing what seems to him to be the future. Orwell's integrity lies, in fact, in the unrelieved despair of the book. His honesty prevents him from giving his book the kind of cheap happy ending that we find in Huxley's *Ape and Essence*.

The chief character is Winston Smith, a crypto-deviationist in a totalitarian England of 1984. (One of the ironic touches is that Orwell presents us with an England dominated by *American* power. I have noticed that many readers of the book believe that it represents England dominated by *Russia*—perhaps a species of 'Freudian error'.) It is an England where every decent humane concept is destroyed. 'War is peace', 'Freedom is slavery', 'Ignorance is strength', are the party slogans. The Ministry of Truth disseminates falsehood, the Ministry of Love spreads hatred, and Big Brother is the ruthless dictator. The dominant theme of the book is deception, and the perversion of all standards. Smith falls in love, surreptitiously, yet under torture he and his mistress betray each other. He confides his secret thoughts of revolt to O'Brien, a character whom he thinks to be sympathetic, yet who turns out to

<sup>1</sup> *Animal Farm*, 1949 (4th edn.), p. 25.

be the arch-inquisitor. Mental and physical torture, combined with the constant pressure of totalitarian propaganda, are too much for Smith:

He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.<sup>1</sup>

*Nineteen-Eighty-Four* is a painful, indeed terrifying book. Orwell's hatred of power is not enough. His very integrity lies in the fact that he is prepared to admit the spiritual bankruptcy of that same humane integrity divorced from supernatural belief.

To assume that Orwell's case rests in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* would be to allow too much scope for comfortable and complacent moralizing. In a sense, Orwell the man is more important than all or any of his works. Certainly, as a novelist he was not a success, for he had no concern for anything in the nature of artistic perfection. But the essentially journalistic nature of his genius can be seen at its best in *Critical Essays* (1946), a selection of literary articles from 1939-45. With all due consideration, I should say that this is the best critical *journalism* since Middleton Murry in the 'twenties, or at least since Edwin Muir's reviews of novels in the *Listener*. Temperamentally, however, Orwell is quite dissimilar from the usual type of literary critics. The most marked characteristic of his work is a complete absence of *finesse*, of intellectual subtlety of any kind — (after all, he was not wholly unsuccessful as a police officer). In his criticism, he is careful to select topics which do not require delicate distinctions and qualifications: he succeeds best when he can ask of a writer, 'Where exactly does he stand, socially, morally and politically?'<sup>2</sup> Those are the questions that are of primary interest to him — questions of aesthetics, 'is it a work of art?' he leaves to look after themselves.

It might be said that Orwell's criticism is merely a series of blinding glimpses of the obvious, yet the reason why Orwell's judgements have never been made before is not that they are too obvious, but that hitherto cant and squeamishness have prevented

<sup>1</sup> *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* (2nd edn.), 1950, p. 298.

<sup>2</sup> *Critical Essays*, p. 8.

them from being made at all. Only the singleminded seriousness of Orwell could perform the very necessary sewage disposal work on Salvador Dali and James Hadley Chase, for example. The sociological studies on Boys' Weeklies and on P. G. Wodehouse are sound, but the essay on comic postcards, where Orwell tries a certain lightness of touch and even archness, is a failure. Again, though Yeats is too subtle a case for his handling, the directness of the essay on Kipling provides a refreshing contrast to the over-subtleties of Eliot's approach, which Orwell rightly criticizes. But most readers will agree, I think, that the essay on Dickens is the finest in the book, and the reason is that, despite the tinge of patronage in his tone, Orwell feels a deep emotional affinity with Dickens's untidy, moralistic radicalism:

His radicalism is of the vaguest kind, and yet one always knows that it is there. That is the difference between being a moralist and a politician. He has no constructive suggestions, not even a clear grasp of the nature of the society he is attacking, only an emotional perception that something is wrong. All he can finally say is, 'Behave decently', which . . . is not necessarily so shallow as it sounds.<sup>1</sup>

The distance in time between Dickens and Orwell is marked only by an increase of self-consciousness and self-awareness, and a decrease in the number of confident assumptions. Of modern writers, perhaps Koestler is the one with whom Orwell has most in common. In his essay on Koestler, he tries to distinguish his own position from that of Koestler, as expressed in the latter's *Arrival and Departure*. Koestler's novel deals with a left-wing idealist whose faith in political ideologies is completely shattered, and who yet continues in his 'crusading' zeal, though its doctrinal bases have crumbled. Orwell condemns Koestler for his 'short-term pessimism', yet there is a closer affinity between Koestler and himself than he would care to admit. Perhaps Orwell is a 'long-term pessimist'. The tragedy of Orwell and of Koestler (for to the Catholic observer it is a tragedy) is their use of moral energy in the pursuit of a fruitless ideal. Orwell declares:

The real problem is how to restore the religious attitude while accepting death as final . . . Perhaps, whether desirable or not, the Earthly Paradise isn't possible. Perhaps some degree of suffering is ineradicable from human life, perhaps the choice before man is always a choice of evils, perhaps even the aim of Socialism is not to make the world perfect but to make it better.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 140-1.



Orwell's case, as I declared at the outset, demands above all sympathy, and should provoke heart-searching and not complacency among Catholic readers. It is so easy to point out his muddleheadedness, and the ultimate futility and despair that are the outcome of his lack of valid beliefs. Should we not rather consider the other side of the picture?—the appalling wastage of intellectual integrity, the loss of a champion of the honest and decent values of human life. Is it not perhaps partly the responsibility of English Catholic intellectuals that such a man should have been so ignorant of the implications of Catholic teaching, or should have been repelled by certain external and non-essential characteristics of English Catholic intellectual life? We have, I think, still much to learn of the exquisite charity and tact necessary for the Christian apostolate, and especially to consider the full implications of those memorable words, 'Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our hearts shall find no rest till they rest in Thee.' In this vale of tears we are all fellow-travellers.

# THE THREE CIRCLES

By WILHELM SCHENK<sup>1</sup>

IN the preface to the *Handbook of the Christian Soldier* (*Encheiridion Militis Christiani*) Erasmus speaks of Christ as the immovable centre around which there are three circles: the first circle contains the clergy, the second the secular rulers, and the third the rest of the laity. These last, though furthest removed from Christ, yet belong to Him also and must be brought nearer to the centre by careful education. Do not clergy and rulers like to be called fathers? And no real father wants his children always to remain in infancy.<sup>2</sup>

The elevation of the laity towards Christ: that, as we have seen, was Erasmus' chief concern, and here it appears in its proper context—in the context of what we are accustomed to call the mediaeval conception of society. How could it be otherwise? Erasmus is so often represented as the forerunner of Voltaire and of all latter-day would-be Voltaires that it is not superfluous to recall his dates: 1466–1536. This man, whose thought was formed at the turn of the fifteenth century, could not but think of his society in the terms of contemporary Christendom: *sacerdotium*, *regnum*, and *vulgus*. Each of the three circles had to be appealed to in a different way: let us listen to Erasmus' appeals in turn.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Wilhelm Schenk died an untimely death in Bristol in June 1949 at the age of thirty. Born in Prague in July 1918 he was the son of Professor Ferdinand Schenk of Prague University. With his brother he fled from Prague on the day of its occupation by the German armed forces in 1939. (After the father's death, the mother joined her sons in England.) In England he took a first class honours external B.A. of London University, and afterwards obtained his Doctorate of Philosophy in the University of Manchester. His subject was history. After a short period of lectureship in German at Manchester, he became lecturer in history at University College, Exeter. Here his influence both as a scholar and a Christian was deeply felt. A devout Roman Catholic, his religion meant everything to him. He had planned a series of books to demonstrate the Christian Idea. His first was on the notion of a Just Society studied in the Puritan movement in England (*The Concern for Social Justice in the Puritan Revolution*, London, 1948). His second was on the idea of civilization, and he chose the life of Reginald Pole to illustrate his thesis (*Reginald Pole, Cardinal of England*, London, 1950). His third book was to have been on the idea of Christianity, and he selected Erasmus as the medium through which to express his ideas. This is the second chapter of the proposed book.

<sup>2</sup> Allen, Vol. III, pp. 368, 369, 374. (This is the preface to the second edition of Erasmus' *Encheiridion Militis Christiani*, 1518.)

## I

In working out his educational plans for the laity, Erasmus became one of the founders of the humanist school, a type of school that has played a distinguished part in the history of our civilization. In the curriculum of that school the emphasis falls on the study of the classical books of Greek and Roman literature, and on the mastery of the Latin tongue. Latin was the only language Erasmus knew well, but for men like More and Vives too, who knew and used their mother tongues, Latin was the chief vehicle of humanist thought; they, and many after them, accepted bilinguality as an inevitable condition: Latin for the cultural activities of the élite, the vernacular for all other purposes.

We must not forget that in the early sixteenth century Latin was a far more flexible instrument than any of the European vernaculars (except Italian) owing to the continued and varied use to which it had been put by the classical authors. The kind of attention that Erasmus, a true 'philologist', wished to devote to words was hardly possible, at that time, outside the Latin language. Erasmus is quite explicit about his 'philology', about the unique importance he ascribes to the human word. The right word, he believes, is the image of the mind, of that part of man by which he is furthest removed from the animals. And through the mind man can even approach the deity, because the human mind is an image of the mind of God (*quaedam divinae mentis imago*). In this sense it is God who is speaking when man, impelled by a right intention, finds the right word. The human word is a reflexion, however feeble, of the Divine Word, of the Logos, of Christ Himself.<sup>1</sup> The fundamental aim of true philology cannot be put more comprehensively or more profoundly.

There is then, Erasmus holds, a close connexion between word and thing, *verbum* and *res*; his critique of scholasticism made him immune against the strong nominalist tendencies of the age. Erasmus therefore ascribes great value to rhetoric, the training in the use of right words, as the first stage in the study of right thought; in this pursuit, Quintilian and in particular Cicero are the great models. Grammar is useful only in so far as it helps to understand the classical authors, not as a subject in itself. The second stage of education is reached when, with the advancing

<sup>1</sup> O.B., Vol. V, p. 645.

years, the systematic teaching of morals can begin. This teaching must be based on the Scriptures, the Fathers, and the 'holy pagans': Cicero again, Plutarch, Seneca, Vergil, and others. Greek must be learned mainly for the reading of the chief authors; in this case linguistic study is much less important because Greek need not be used as a living language.

A *living* language: this is, obviously, what Latin was to Erasmus. Though the 'renaissance' of Latin brought with it a 'renaissance' of many Latin authors, Erasmus never forgot that their language, the language of ancient Rome, was dead, as dead as ancient Rome itself. 'Today,' Erasmus writes, 'there are no senators in Rome, no senate, no "populus", no voting of the "tribus", none of the former magistrates, laws, assemblies, legal forms, provinces, municipalities, allies, citizens: in short, Rome is not Rome, nothing remains of it except ruins, the scars and traces of an ancient calamity.'<sup>1</sup>

This statement is contained in Erasmus' dialogue *Ciceronianus* (1528)—a delightful work in which he repudiates the slavish imitation of the ancients as practised by an Italian circle centring round the influential *arbiter litterarum*, Pietro Bembo. These men were pledged to the belief that the only Latin worth writing and reading was that of Cicero. One of Bembo's friends, the young Fleming Christopher Longolius, took a solemn vow not to read any books for five years except Cicero's and never to use any words that could not be found in Cicero's writings. Erasmus poured scorn on these antics: 'Cicero,' he writes, 'the senator and proconsul, writes to men of his own rank about the efforts of the provincial commanders, about the battle-order of the legions; he points out the dangers, and predicts the outcome of events. When Longolius, imitating Cicero, writes similar things to his learned friends living in leisure, as if he were concerned about the highest matters, must not the affectation of it have a chilling effect (*nonne friget affectatio?*)'<sup>2</sup> Erasmus was imperturbably aware of the difference between his own age and antiquity, and comparing the two he was by no means convinced that the ancients had the advantage in every way—certainly not, for example, with regard to religion.

Again and again Erasmus insists that the 'holy pagans', though remarkably spiritual, were necessarily ignorant of some essential truths which Christians know through the revelation of Jesus

<sup>1</sup> O.B., Vol. I, p. 854.

<sup>2</sup> O.B., loc. cit.—For Bembo and Longolius, cf. my *Reginald Pole*, ch. i.

Christ. That, of course, was not the kind of thing that greatly interested Longolius and the Ciceronian coterie—'a fellowship of people', as Erasmus justly remarks, 'who care more for literature than for piety'.<sup>1</sup> But are they really faithful, he asks, to the *spirit* of Cicero? Would not Cicero, if he came to earth again, speak about Christian things in Christian terms and devote as much of his energy to Christianity as he did in his own life to the highest things of his age? To devote oneself to the highest things: nothing less is required of a true disciple of the great Roman moralist.<sup>2</sup> For the chief purpose of education is to teach man the right use of his faculties and thus to enable him to lead a good life and to face death with a well-grounded hope of salvation.

When John Colet, Erasmus' close friend, founded his celebrated school at St. Paul's, in London, the Erasmian school *par excellence*, he dedicated it to the Boy Jesus, whose statue, in the attitude of a teacher, was placed above the High Master's desk. For that school Erasmus wrote a 'Sermon on the Boy Jesus to be recited by a boy.'<sup>3</sup> This is how the boy was to end his sermon: 'Him alone let us love, Him alone imitate, who is the true and absolute model of piety. To Him let us cling and in Him find our joy, who is true peace, delight, life, and immortality.' And in a short poem put into the mouth of the Boy Jesus of St. Paul's, Erasmus sums up his educational rule:

First learn to form Me in a pure life,  
And then proceed to pious letters.  
(*Discite me primum, atque effingite puris*  
*Moribus, inde pias addite litterulas.*)<sup>4</sup>

Colet's great foundation was not the first school at St. Paul's: a school attached to that cathedral had existed for a very long time. But the chief purpose of the earlier school, as indeed of all mediaeval cathedral schools, had been the formation of clerics; Colet's institution, in accordance with Erasmus' ideas, was meant for the laity. The lay character of Colet's school comes out clearly in the foundation statutes, where it is laid down that the school was to be administered not by priests, as one might have expected in an establishment founded by the Dean of St. Paul's, but by the Company of Mercers. It is noteworthy, too, that the first High Master, William Lily, was a married layman. Indeed, Erasmus

<sup>1</sup> O.B., loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> O.B., Vol. V, pp. 501-508.

<sup>3</sup> O.B., Vol. I, p. 840.

<sup>4</sup> O.B., Vol. V, p. 1106.

tells us directly that his friend, in founding the school, had mainly the future of the commonwealth (*res publica*) in mind.<sup>1</sup> Though membership of St. Paul's School was by no means confined to the well-to-do, Colet probably thought primarily of the men in Erasmus' second circle, the men whom another English Erasmian, Thomas Elyot, was to describe as the 'governors': those who were called to exercise secular authority of any kind.<sup>2</sup> Erasmian education, at that early stage, intended to form the European élite of 'governors': the kings and courtiers, as well as the most active and most responsible members of the rising middle class, the Pirckheimers, Craneveldts and Thomas Mores of the future.

## II

When Erasmus, in the particularly critical year 1519 (the Lutheran conflict had just begun to agitate Europe), wished to set before his readers the ideal 'governor', he chose to write a short biographical sketch of his intimate friend, Thomas More.<sup>3</sup> We are all familiar with the chief features of his vivid portrait: More's kindliness (*suavitas*), his sense of humour, his uprightness, his erudition, and his piety. To the passage on More's religious character, Erasmus adds the significant remark: 'And then there are people who think that Christians can be found only in monasteries!' And having described how More had to be dragged to court by King Henry VIII, he exclaims: 'Happy would be the states if all princes chose for magistrates men like More!'

The Erasmian 'governor', as exemplified by Thomas More, is characterized by a deep concern for public welfare and by an unshakable devotion to justice conceived as reflecting the divine order of the universe. Erasmus was quite entitled to think well of a state where a More had been called to fill prominent offices. In other countries too an increasing number of subordinate 'governors' seemed to look to Erasmus for inspiration. But Erasmus did not forget that in the political circumstances of his

<sup>1</sup> Allen, Vol. IV, p. 518: '... in hoc esse praecipuam reipublicae spem, si prima aetas bonis rationibus institueretur'. The Foundation Statutes are printed in J. H. Lupton, *Life of Dean Colet* (1887).

<sup>2</sup> Elyot, *The Boke named the Governour* (Everyman ed.), particularly Bk. I, chaps. ii and iii.

<sup>3</sup> Allen, Vol. IV, pp. 13-23; a letter to Ulrich von Hutten, 23 July, 1519, published in the same year.



age practically everything depended on the reigning princes themselves.

At one rather happy stage of his life, in 1517, Erasmus was inclined to take a hopeful view of the European princes. 'We have now,' he wrote in a letter, 'a Leo X for Pope; a French king content to make peace for the sake of religion when he had means to continue the war; a Maximilian for emperor, old and eager for peace; Henry VIII, king of England, also on the side of peace; the Archduke Charles (the future Emperor Charles V), a young man of divine gifts.'<sup>1</sup> Did Erasmus really feel like this? Or did he hope that such a public pronouncement (most of his letters were written for publication) would itself help to strengthen the cause of peace? We do not know. But only eighteen months later, in a private letter to Colet, Erasmus complained bitterly: 'Oh how the scene of human affairs is changing! . . . The princes together with the Pope and perhaps with the Turks, conspire against the happiness of the people.'<sup>2</sup> This was not an altogether new opinion of Erasmus: several years before he had already directed some pungent criticism against monarchs. 'They think,' he had written in the *Praise of Folly*, 'that they have sufficiently acquitted themselves in the duty of governing if they do but ride constantly a-hunting, breed up good race-horses, sell places and offices to the highest bidders among the courtiers, and find out new ways for pocketing their people's property and hooking in a larger revenue to their own exchequer; for the procurement whereof they will always have some pretended claim and title, that though it be manifest extortion, yet it may bear the show of law and justice.'

As the century proceeded, one political disaster after another fulfilled Erasmus' worst fears. His faithful disciple Vives arrived at a desperate conclusion: 'Princes,' he wrote in 1531, 'have for the most part such corrupt hearts and are so intoxicated by their good fortune that they cannot be reformed for the better by any art. These blind men and leaders of the blind, as the Lord calls them, must be left alone. We must transfer our solicitude to the people, who are more tractable.'<sup>3</sup> In a sense Erasmus, too, can be said to have transferred his solicitude to the people, but at the same time he did not fail to lay down the necessary rules of behaviour for

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Capito, 1517: Allen, Vol. II, p. 488. I use Froude's translation; *Life and Letters of Erasmus*, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> Allen, Vol. III, p. 429.

<sup>3</sup> Vives: *On Education*, transl. Foster Watson (1913), p. 278. (I have slightly altered the translation.)

princes. These rules are contained in his treatise *Institutio Principis Christiani* ('The Education of the Christian Prince').<sup>1</sup>

The starting-point of Erasmus' inquiry is the Aristotelian distinction between the true ruler who has the common good at heart, and the tyrant who thinks only of his private ends. There is no difference at all, Erasmus goes on to explain, between private and public morality; a good prince is simply a good man in a specially important position; moral law must govern the behaviour of high and low alike. In appealing to the moral law Erasmus is satisfied with a rough *consensus omnium*, emanating from the great ancient thinkers and echoed by everyone's innate moral sense.

Aiming at the common good is a general obligation; even heathen rulers have the light of nature to guide them. But a Christian prince, Erasmus thinks, has altogether more exacting duties. To him must be applied the words of Christ: 'Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant' (Matt. xx, 25-27). *Administratio* (it is sobering to reflect on the history of this word), not *imperium*—'service' not 'rule': that is the chief duty of the Christian prince. His 'Imitation of Christ' consists in following the example of the Son of Man 'who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister' (Matt. xx, 28). A Christian prince must stay awake so that others may rest; must work so that others may have leisure; must neglect his private affairs for the sake of his subjects' well-being. 'You have a share,' Erasmus addresses the Christian prince, 'in the sacraments of Christ; will you refuse His doctrine? You have taken your oath on the Word of Christ—will you then descend to the behaviour of Caesar or Alexander the Great?' (Not all ancient heroes, we note, were heroes to Erasmus.) And Erasmus' warning loses nothing by being well-known: 'In death we are all equal, beggars as well as kings. But the judgement after death will not be equal: none will be dealt with more severely than the mighty.'

A ruler has not only duties towards his own subjects: he has equally important obligations towards other rulers and their sub-

<sup>1</sup> This treatise was published in 1516, two further editions in 1518 and 1519. Most of the quotations used in the text can be found in O.B., Vol. IV, pp. 438-447. On Erasmus' political theory of P. Mesnard, *L'Essor de la Philosophie Politique au 16<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1936).

jects. His main duty in that direction is the preservation of peace. Erasmus does not wish to decide whether there can be such a thing as a just war, but he is quite certain that a war cannot possibly be just if all other means of settling the dispute have not been tried before. If the princes are prepared to work for amicable settlements of their quarrels there will be very few wars. And war among Christians, he repeats again and again, is nothing but fratricide: The fatherhood of God establishes the brotherhood of man. When Christ was born, did the angels intone fanfares of war? did they promise victories, triumphs, trophies? no, they announced peace on earth. 'Take away,' Erasmus warns, 'the soul from the body, and the whole scaffolding collapses. Take away peace, and Christian society must perish.'

Erasmus never tired of denouncing war. In many of his writings, sometimes on the slightest provocation, he poured out his anger and grief about what seemed to him the continuous self-mutilation of Christendom. 'I cannot help loving peace and concord,' he wrote,<sup>1</sup> and this love was much more than a vague sentiment, as is sometimes supposed. To Erasmus the source of all concord is Christ, who is in truth the Prince of Peace; all discord, on the other hand, is devilish, because it militates against the Creator and Redeemer of mankind. In the bitterest of Erasmus' Colloquies, 'Charon', the boatman of the underworld is told by the evil genius Alastor to expect a particularly huge consignment of shades, owing to the furiously raging wars on earth. Charon shows himself well-informed: he knows that 'the three monarchs of the world' (the Emperor Charles V, Francis I of France, and Henry VIII of England) 'are bent upon one another's destruction with a mortal hatred'. But Charon continues:

there is danger, lest some good spirit should start up and of a sudden exhort them to peace: and men's minds are variable, for I have heard that among the living there is a scribbler who is continually, in his numerous writings, inveighing against wars and exhorting to peace.

*Alastor*: Ay, ay, but he has a long time been talking to the deaf. . . . And there are others that advance our course no less than the Furies themselves.

*Charon*: Who are they?

*Alastor*: They are a certain sort of animals in black and white vestments, ash-coloured coats, and various other dresses, that

<sup>1</sup> Allen, Vol. V, p. 227. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrases on the New Testament* (1541), Vol. I. Preface.

are always hovering about the courts of princes and are continually instilling into their ears the love of war, and exhorting the nobility and common people to it, haranguing them in their sermons that it is a just, holy and religious war. . . . In France they preach it up that God is on the French side, and they can never be overcome that have God for their protector. In England and Spain the cry is: The war is not the King's but God's; therefore, if they do but fight like men they depend upon getting the victory; and if anyone should chance to fall in the battle, he will not die but fly directly up into heaven, arms and all.

Wars of this kind were the inevitable outcome of the political tendencies of Erasmus' age. For some time political thought and reality had moved in the direction of absolute rule, first of the Pope, and then of the secular princes. Some canonists of the later Middle Ages had developed the idea of the Papal *plenitudo potestatis*; in their teaching the Pope's will tended to become the sole criterion of law. Similarly, secular rulers everywhere announced and made good claims to complete absolutism. Such claims were often buttressed by an appeal to the Divine Right of the secular rulers, the 'powers that be', who were now increasingly regarded as directly 'ordained of God' and therefore as provided with a supernatural authority. From Erasmus' point of view there were two distinct dangers in these tendencies: first, the divorce between ethics and politics as represented most clearly by Machiavelli but more shamefacedly by many others, and secondly, the attempt of the secular state to arrogate to itself the spiritual prestige of the Christian Church. It is against this background that we must set Erasmus' political ideas: he was among the few men of his time who signalized the coming of Leviathan.

■ In his essay on the 'Three Circles' Erasmus deals explicitly with the idea of Divine Right.<sup>1</sup> The actions of princes and magistrates, he writes, must not be ascribed to Christ; secular rule cannot claim to be based on *ius divinum*. The function of rulers is not to make people good but to make them less bad, and to see that the bad ones do not harm the commonwealth. The most that can be claimed for rulers is that they represent the image, or rather the shadow, of divine justice, but only in so far as even iron can reflect light. They must be honoured for that, and at least tolerated even when they are bad, as long as they preserve law and order. This guarded approval was not likely to betray Erasmus into

<sup>1</sup> Allen, Vol. III, p. 369.

accepting the Divine Right of Kings; he was able to preserve an admirable balance. Knowing as much as he did about the seamy side of contemporary politics, it is doubly remarkable that he never made the slightest attempt to relax his exacting precepts. The full tension between ideal and reality is brought out in the *Praise of Folly*, in a passage where the ideal of true kingship, so far from being invalidated by the sordid reality in which it has to maintain itself, achieves symbolic force:<sup>1</sup>

Let us feign now a person [Folly is made to say] ignorant of the laws and constitutions of that realm he lives in, an enemy to the public good, studious only for his own private interest, addicted wholly to pleasures and delights, a hater of learning, a professed enemy to liberty and truth, careless and unmindful of the common concerns, taking all the measures of justice and honesty from the false beam of self-interest and advantage. After this, hang about his neck a golden chain, for an intimation that he ought to have all virtues linked together; then set a crown of gold and jewels on his head, for a token that he ought to overtop and outshine others in all good qualities; next, put into his hand a royal sceptre for a symbol of justice and integrity; lastly, clothe him with purple, for a sign of tender love and affection to the commonwealth.

### III

The men in the first circle, nearest to Christ, could not hope to remain immune from the activities of that searching mind. Erasmus, it is true, did not regard Church reform itself as lying within his province; it was not up to him or his like, he wrote to Rome, to initiate the remedies that would heal the corruption of the clergy.<sup>2</sup> But a great publicist whose chief concern was the renewal of *pietas*, was bound to discuss in his writings the decay of the Church and to suggest improvements.

Priests, Erasmus states with emphasis, are particularly susceptible to two vices: avarice and ambition; contrary to Christ's injunction, 'Feed my sheep', they all too often plunder their flock and lord it over them. Monks, in addition to these faults, are often prone to superstition, arrogance, hypocrisy, and quarrelsomeness, and they tend to value more highly the rules of their particular

<sup>1</sup> *Praise of Folly* (1937), pp. 162-3. (Translation slightly altered.)

<sup>2</sup> Allen, Vol. IV, p. 410. (Letter to Cardinal Campeggio.)

order than the rules of Christ. Finally, most churchmen lay too much stress on ceremonies and ascetic practices.<sup>1</sup>

That was Erasmus' diagnosis. With regard to his cure it is important to realize that this essentially conservative reformer did not wish to *abolish* any of the existing institutions or practices. Monasteries must be put in order according to the intentions of their founders; the over-valuation of the contemplative life must be counteracted; no one must be allowed to take the vows at an immature age—but some people will always find fulfilment in monasteries. Ceremonies, pilgrimages, fasting and other mortifications, all these must be retained, provided they are not regarded as more than minor constituents of the religious life and do not degenerate into mechanical practices. And so from one tree to another, skilfully pruning and lopping off, never uprooting.

Erasmus, the teacher, found it easiest to expound his ideas by pointing to their embodiment in persons (his *doctrina Christi*, too, could not be fully translated into a set of propositions: it was embodied only in the Person of Christ). Just as he had used Thomas More as an exemplar of the Christian layman in a responsible public position, so he used two other friends of his as exemplars of clerical piety: Jean Vitrier, a French Franciscan, and John Colet, the great Dean of St. Paul's. In June 1521, at a time when Erasmus took great pains to define his attitude to Luther, he wrote a long letter to a German professor, in which he draws pen-portraits of these two men.<sup>2</sup>

Vitrier is described first. He was a friar—rather, it is true, by the force of circumstances than by his own choice, but in spite of that he never advised anyone to leave the religious life, nor did he ever consider such a step himself. Instead, he concentrated on the activity most suitable to his order: preaching. He had an extensive and deep knowledge of the Bible and the Fathers, and all his sermons were full of the Holy Scriptures. And not content with this, he also practised what he preached: in short, 'his whole life was nothing but a sacred sermon'.

The picture of Colet, which follows next, is executed in greater detail, owing to Erasmus' more intimate knowledge of him. Erasmus gives us a glimpse of Colet's inner struggles: we are told that he had to overcome considerable natural faults, such as haughtiness and impatience, immoderate attachment to sensual pleasures, and even covetousness. Colet systematically combated

<sup>1</sup> Allen, Vol. III, pp. 371, 373.

<sup>2</sup> Allen, Vol. IV, pp. 507-527.



all these faults, some of them by vigorous ascetic practices, without ascribing much positive value to asceticism in itself. In general he was not favourably inclined towards monasteries, but he praised some Italian and German monks, whom he had met on his journeys, as living truly evangelical lives. He was a sharp critic of loose-living and rapacious clerics, and set them a good example by the eventual purity of his own life. By the foundation of his school dedicated to Jesus he showed his regard for pious learning and good letters; in this way he also gave expression to his love for children whose natural simplicity delighted him. Both he and Vitrier, Erasmus concludes his account, deserve to be numbered among the saints, even if no Pope will ever canonize them.

These portraits of two model priests were meant to enforce the cause of Church reform. Erasmus was right in thinking that without such concrete embodiments the best sermons were bound to go unheeded; the laity could not be expected to be impressed by anything but the living example of good shepherds. Erasmus' genuine concern for the moral reform of the clergy is commonly acknowledged, but he is often criticized for over-stressing good conduct at the expense of faith. Such a criticism implies a serious misunderstanding. The highest form of good conduct, Erasmus always proclaims, is the imitation of Christ, springing from a belief in Christ's divinity. Erasmus, like the host in his *Convivium Religiosum*, often meditates in his works 'upon the unspeakable counsel of God in giving His son for the redemption of mankind'. 'The sum of Christian philosophy,' he writes, 'is contained in this: we should understand that all our hope lies in God who freely grants us everything through His Son Jesus Christ. By His death we have been redeemed, and baptism unites us to His body.'<sup>1</sup> And there are innumerable similar statements in Erasmus' writings. The basis of his moralism was unquestionably his belief in the divinity of Christ.

That belief is of course the central Christian dogma, and Erasmus made no attempt to rationalize the Incarnation. 'No dogma' was not his cry: he merely asked for as little dogma as possible. 'Do not inquire,' he writes, 'how Christ's body escaped from the tomb: it is enough to know that it did escape. In what manner is Christ's body on the sacred table, and where is the bread? Don't ask and be satisfied with the belief that the Lord's body is present. Don't try to find out how the Son can be distinct

<sup>1</sup> Allen, Vol. IV, p. 118.

from the Father if they have the same nature: it is enough to believe that Father, Son and Holy Ghost are three Persons but one God.<sup>1</sup> Any inquiry beyond the fundamentals of faith Erasmus regarded as *impia curiositas*. He was, to revive a once well-known term, a 'minimizer', wishing to confine dogmatic faith to a small number of indispensable articles.<sup>2</sup> On other matters there could be discussion and speculation but no objectively sanctioned certainty: in this sphere there were bound to be differences of opinion.

Erasmus' attitude to dogma springs from his intellectual temper—a temper that goes a long way towards explaining his affinity with so many Englishmen and his general influence in England. There are some who rejoice in the clear-cut definitions of dogmatic theology; so far from keeping down the number of theological dogmas, they tend to introduce dogmatism into all spheres of human life. Their logical minds cannot rest until the last goat of error is divided from the last sheep of truth. Erasmus, on the other hand, cannot forget that man is not very well qualified for this kind of ultimate separation. Who are we, he seems to ask, that we pretend to know so much? It is in this sense that Colet accuses Thomas Aquinas of 'defining everything with temerity and pride'.<sup>3</sup> It is easy to understand why Erasmus has often been thought of as, fundamentally, a sceptic. There was, to be sure, a good deal of scepticism in him, but this does not provide the clue to his thought. He tried to achieve the most difficult task of all: to face a mysterious world that is continuously revealing itself, with as open a mind as is compatible with necessary belief. But what are the articles of necessary belief? It was here that Erasmus had to decide for or against the Catholic Church, and this he did without any hesitation. 'The Church,' he always maintained, 'never goes wrong in whatever pertains to salvation'; 'what has been transmitted by the general assent of the orthodox doctors and what has been clearly defined by the Church must no longer be discussed, but believed.'<sup>4</sup> Despite all her blemishes, the Roman Church was, to Erasmus, the Church of the Apostles and the Fathers, and hence the infallible guardian of the deposit of faith. Erasmus never had any serious doubts on this point. Thus he did not find it too diffi-

<sup>1</sup> Erasmus, *Paraphrases on the New Testament* (1541), Vol. I, f.d 5.

<sup>2</sup> Allen, Vol. IV, p. 118. On later 'minimism', cf. Newman's *Difficulties of Anglicans* (1900), Vol. II, p. 320.

<sup>3</sup> Allen, Vol. IV, p. 520.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in R. H. Murray, *Erasmus and Luther* (1920), pp. 30, 220.

cult to accept the traditional doctrine of the Eucharist: 'I cannot be,' he wrote, 'and never shall be persuaded that Christ, who is the Truth, who is Love, should have suffered His beloved spouse, the Church, to cling so long to hateful error, as to worship wheaten bread instead of Himself. Concerning the consecrating words, I confess I have often longed to be more fully enlightened. But in scruples of this kind I easily agree with the judgement of the Catholic Church.'<sup>1</sup>

Erasmus' 'minimism' helped him to work out a far-reaching doctrine of toleration.<sup>2</sup> Heresy, he knows, has been present throughout the history of Christianity, and it is not likely ever to disappear. But much that goes by the name of heresy, especially in modern times, is simply legitimate disagreement on doubtful points. In such cases nothing more is required than a thorough and open discussion. But what of those who dissent from clearly established articles of faith—the Bohemian Brethren, for instance, who deny the Real Presence, or the Anabaptists who reject Baptism? Here again, friendly discussion must be tried: comprehension, teaching, persuasion. If everything fails, the Church can resort to spiritual censures, even excommunication, but she must not use any physical force or take any part whatever in heresy proceedings by the State. This, Erasmus holds, has been the rule in the ancient Church; the mediaeval innovation which resulted in the combined efforts of Church and State to stamp out heresy, must be abandoned. Biblically, Erasmus takes his stand on the Parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. xiii): both wheat and tares must be allowed to grow up together; the sifting must be postponed to a later occasion. Meanwhile it is salutary to concentrate on the wide measure of agreement that exists between all believers in Christ. It goes without saying that Erasmus' statements on heresy were not acceptable to most of his contemporaries. In 1527 they were solemnly condemned by the theological faculty of Paris University; the professors stubbornly refused to be taught by their unruly ex-student.

Behind Erasmus' attitude to toleration, and indeed behind his most important convictions, is a certain trust in man—in man not primarily as man but as the image, in spite of grievous blemishes, of God. This likeness implies, above all, a participation in Divine

<sup>1</sup> Allen, Vol. VIII, p. 121: 30.3.1529 (I use R. H. Murray's translation, *op. cit.*, p. 298).

<sup>2</sup> For Erasmus' views on toleration, cf., e.g., O.B., Vol. IX, pp. 477, 732, 858, 1292.

Reason and in Divine Freedom. The human mind, feeble as it is, yet reflects its Divine Creator; the human will, though it cannot bring about salvation, is yet free enough to achieve something inherently good.<sup>1</sup> All this confers on man a high spiritual status. 'It is necessary for thee to know,' writes Colet in a short English treatise, 'that God of his great grace hath made thee like to his own similitude or image, having regard to thy memory, understanding, and free will. . . . And therefore by his infinite mercy and grace call unto thy remembrance the degree or dignity, the which Almighty God of his goodness hath called thee unto.'<sup>2</sup> The dignity of man (in this hierarchical sense of the word): the Erasmians laid great stress on it, but in doing so they were only restating a great tradition which is embodied, for example, in the Offertory of the Roman Mass: '*Deus qui humanae substantiae dignitatem mirabiliter condidisti et mirabilius reformasti*'—'O God who hast wonderfully created, and still more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature.'

This conception of man was Erasmus' counterbalance against his anti-dogmatism. Trusting in right reason, and language, he could freely explore the uncharted seas of knowledge, even though he knew that he would never explore them fully; hence his delight in the kind of conversation described in the *Convivium Religiosum*. No conversations between Erasmus and his friends have been directly recorded, but we know that he, Colet and More were exceptionally good talkers. Among these friends the two main conditions of a fruitful conversation were present: the right measure of agreement, and the free search for further truth. This combination enabled Erasmus to make a 'profound statement about More, which is equally applicable to himself: 'No one,' he writes of his friend, 'is less influenced by the opinion of the crowd, and yet no one is less remote from common sense (*a sensu communi*).'<sup>3</sup>

*Sensus communis*: that, to Erasmus, comprises the 'doctrine of Christ', the central teaching of the Church, and the best thought of the ancients and moderns: *pietas*, *mores* and *bonae litterae* as established by the European tradition. This tradition, unlike its scholastic caricatures, is not a closed system but remains open, within the limits indicated by the past experience of 'common sense'; everyone must have his say in the continuous *Convivium Religiosum*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *De Libero Arbitrio*, and *Hyperaspistes* (O.B., Vol. IX), *passim*. On these points cf. my *Reginald Pole*, ch. x.

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Lupton, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

<sup>3</sup> Allen, Vol. IV, p. 16.

of mankind. Erasmus' struggle against scholasticism is only an example of the recurring conflict between the closed minds of any age and those who regard it as characteristically human not to cease from exploring.

And here it becomes apparent that Erasmus, in an important sense, was not after all, *homo pro se*, or rather, that when he was most *homo pro se* he was, like Thomas More, nearest to the sense of the ages. The most characteristically Erasmian gesture is only seemingly one of solitude: it is the gesture of writing, as in Dürer's Jerome or in Holbein's portrait in the Louvre. Writing—that is speaking to a friend, or to the 'pious reader', or to the great minds of the past. P. S. Allen therefore calls him, wittily and profoundly, the 'Master of those who talk'. Conversation, that social activity *par excellence*, is Erasmus' element, not only when he is in direct contact with friends like Colet and More, but everywhere and at all times. And Erasmus, at his best, can achieve the highest kind of conversation—the kind that enables the partners, in the common pursuit of truth, to form each other into ever more human shape.<sup>1</sup>

It was this attitude alone, we can venture to say, that was capable of revitalizing tradition at that particular moment; it was clearly an Erasmian moment. In a passage of self-analysis Erasmus wrote in 1524: 'I wish that all should unite in the endeavour . . . to establish proper regard for the dignity of the priesthood as well as for the liberty of the people, whom the Lord Jesus wanted to be free.'<sup>2</sup> 'The dignity of the priesthood' and 'the liberty of the people'—the reform of the Church and the Christian education of the laity: all the circles were equally concerned and only such a common endeavour could preserve peace. For a short time Erasmus seems to have hoped that this aim would be realized. But soon he was bitterly disillusioned, and the intensely experienced grief about the enveloping darkness of human affairs was not to leave him again in his lifetime.

<sup>1</sup> There are some excellent observations on these matters in a book by Walter Rüegg, *Cicero und der Humanismus* (Zürich, 1946), particularly pp. 78–92. I am also greatly indebted to G. Toffanin's luminous interpretation of Erasmus in *La Fine del Logos* (1948), pp. 47–84. The view of tradition put forward in the text owes much to the writings of T. S. Eliot. Allen's remark: *Erasmus, Lectures and Wayfaring Sketches*, 1934, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Allen Vol. V, p. 227.



# EUROPEAN THOUGHT AND THE UNITY OF EUROPE

*By* JULIÁN MARÍAS

EUROPE is an extremely delicate matter; so much so, that whenever a hand is laid upon it the European with any historical sensibility shudders; for all acts and all intentions are for good or ill. He shudders no less when anyone, frivolously or in haste, projects upon the reality of Europe that dangerous stuff called ideas. As thought itself is also a very prickly affair, and all precautions are inadequate when dealing with intellectual life, it can easily be understood with what fear of error, and with what fear that the error may be grave, I enter upon this topic; a topic in which the risk involved in each of the terms is multiplied by the other, and which becomes therefore problematical and hazardous to the second degree.

On the other hand, there is nothing more European than the taste for risks, above all when the risk is real, that is to say responsibly undertaken; and almost nothing European is foreign to me. I am going to try therefore to obey at once the double norm of two great men of Europe: the one who incited us to dare to know, and the one who recommended us to have the courage to make mistakes.

## I. THE INTELLECTUAL WEALTH OF EUROPE AND NATIONAL IDEAS

The most characteristic thing about European culture is its pre-European origin. It has arisen from a cultural stock both older than itself and very complex, whose chief ingredients are Greece, Rome and Christianity. This means that before there was a



Europe—in the historical sense of the expression, which is what interests us here—there had been already laid down its intellectual grounds, which have been its source of nourishment and have conditioned its entire destiny. And these grounds are obviously common to all Europe, and independent of the more or less fortuitous genesis of her diverse nationalities. No European country has originated its own culture; rather this very culture had been already developed in a general form, before any one of them existed separately; while its seed was there even before they existed undifferentiated, as a collective whole.

From the time of its first appearance, that is to say in the Middle Ages, the historical reality called Europe functioned in most orders, and obviously in the intellectual order, as a unity; not only in virtue of these common original conditions, but because of the social temper of the groups which created European thought, and also because of the other form of culture which it confronted dialectically: Islam. For on one side Islamic culture was itself in an analogous position with regard to ancient culture, especially the Hellenic, and on the other the Christendom-Islam opposition and interaction exercised a unifying influence on both. The first form of European thought that existed was a result of the creative reaction produced, in the new historical situation which we call Europe, in the face of the triple Greco-Romano-Christian tradition; it is this initial form which, as a unity, confronts Islamic culture and becomes penetrated by it—though we need not here determine precisely how far; the new contribution itself being everywhere broadly the same. The fact that one country, such as Spain, may have found itself more deeply impregnated with Arabic culture than the others ought not to make us forget that this is merely a matter of difference in degree and in the extension of this influence to the region of daily life; but the impregnation itself is general and relatively homogeneous, above all as far as thought is concerned. It is enough to recall what happens in the case of scholasticism, of Dante and of European Christian mysticism.

Finally, when, from the close of the Middle Ages, and especially from the fifteenth century onwards, Europe began to be *national*, when the peculiar character of each nation began to play a decisive rôle and the normal use of the vernaculars profoundly altered the earlier situation, the intellectual minorities of all countries were still above all else *European* and were united, over

the top of national divisions, in a peculiar kind of *living-together*, which though incomplete was not for all that less real: the intellectual life. In the field of thought therefore the original unifying influence persisted for centuries within a Europe split into nationalities.

The consequence of these fundamental facts, which I have tried to recall briefly, is this: that the greater part of the intellectual wealth of Europeans belongs to Europe and not to her particular nations. The few elements of that thought which have a clear national affiliation are without autonomy; they are simply touches added by different countries to a common body of thought compared with which they are themselves insignificant; but more important than this is the fact that these very contributions are without individual substance from the point of view of thought, since they have intellectual reality only as elements of a form of culture whose essential lines and principle content are unmistakably European. The unity of Europe thus seems fully assured, as far as concerns the theme of the present study: European thought in its total conformation. And yet. . . .

## II. INTELLECTUAL NATIONALISM

It is a notorious fact that modern European culture has a marked national character. People talk, quite rightly, of the different national literatures, so tied to their respective languages; of Italian or Flemish painting; of German philosophy, the English theatre or Spanish mysticism. This is fully justified. The nations are a profound historical reality. In them, and in them alone, has European being been brought about; for after affirming that all of us, without distinction, are Europeans, we must add as emphatically that the mere European has never existed. The real and concrete mode of being European is to be French, Dutch or Austrian; and only in the concrete can one live. Thought has roots only when it emerges from the forms of effective life, when it is conditioned by the precise situation of its creator and of those who have to live by it. 'We want the Spanish interpretation of the world,' Ortega used to say in his young days. This attitude, with its analogous forms in every European country, is not only legitimate, but absolutely necessary. Is this the justification of intellectual nationalism?

Leaving this question unanswered for a moment, we must recognize that this nationalism has been reached by different routes. First and most profoundly operative have been 'traditionalism' and what we may call 'European separatism'. The mechanism of both is quite simple. It consists, in the first place, in this, that when there exists a certain continuity in the thought of a country, and therefore a past to refer to, there is produced an alteration in the function of the thought. Instead of holding that the primary mission of thought is to understand and explain things, people believe—or try to believe, as the case may be—that the important thing is to effect a junction with this particular past, to extol it, to draw sustenance from it, and to discover solutions in it, rather than in things themselves. The implication is, of course, that mere things have already been dealt with—in this same national past, naturally. This attitude has a two-fold result. First, there is the sterilization—at least the relative sterilization—of thought, to the extent that there takes place on the one hand a weakening of its problematical character and content,<sup>1</sup> and thus of its peremptoriness and urgency, while on the other hand there is a voluntary limitation of its resources. In the second place, there is the tendency to emphasize the distinctive characteristics of each nation, to discount the rest as far as possible, and try to live 'on one's income'; this is what I have called 'European separatism'.

The next step comes after the French Revolution. National pride, in a form different from the old one, is converted into a political principle and leads to its negative version: hatred—at times contempt, which is one of its forms—between nations. Then differences are sharpened, because it is not now a question of simply doing without the exterior world, but of opposing it; men make a selection among ideas and doctrines, even among themes, and consider that some are their own property, and therefore valuable, while others are foreign and to be avoided. The nationality of an intellectual already permits one, up to a point, to pre-

<sup>1</sup> *Problematisms*. It appears that for the author, as a philosopher of history, thought in general, to be authentic, must have two characteristics: (a) real and direct contact with concrete things; this it must always have; (b) what he calls 'problematisms'. The latter varies with the period. It is not simply something internal or merely psychological however. True 'problematisms' can only arise in the measure that (a) is fulfilled. Thus all inbred forms of thinking—parochial or subjectivist or both—however complicated or puzzling they may be, cannot have this quality. At the same time, 'problematisms' is more specifically regarded as the mark of all genuine thinking in our own period; it is the immediate product of the return to naked reality of a mind which, being modern, is inescapably conditioned by a nationalist, Rationalist and subjectivist past.—Tr.

dict what and about what questions he thinks, just as the colour of the habit used to predetermine theological ideas. The extreme form of this attitude, that produced in our times, is *politicism*; the idea of the nation, which after all does correspond to a full and effective historico-social reality, though partial and not absolute, becomes violently identified with a more or less arbitrary and exacerbated ideology which represents only an abstract, a dilute extract as it were, of the nation. Hence the specially virulent and aggressive character of intellectual nationalism in the last decades; a nationalism which in the less compactly constituted countries makes up for its lack of dramatic qualities by a provincial petulance towards 'the foreign'. Extremisms have always one advantage: in pushing attitudes too far, they usually make them untenable and thus provoke the beginning of their cure. I think the convalescence is starting. But let it not be forgotten that nothing is so dangerous as a relapse.

All this has produced an evident stifling of intellectual life in the majority of countries. The attempt to live on local resources has excessively narrowed horizons and has given a home-made look to European thought, which always used to be the opposite of home-made. Too often are seen French, English or German books which try to expound a discipline as though only in their particular country had it been dealt with; indexes of names in which the most illustrious names of foreigners shine by their absence; interminable and ridiculous discussions over trifling doctrines concerning questions which have been already treated with incomparable profundity, or perhaps resolved, on the other side of the frontier. The examples are in everybody's mind. In this way, the nations have gone on turning themselves into restricted areas, in which certain mental raw materials are used for the running of a successful autarchic industry; an industry itself directed towards internal consumption and, in some cases, towards the production of exports for a number of external markets. But all this implies a failure on the part of thought to be true to itself: forgetfulness, in short, of the fact that the proper function of thought is to find out what things are.

### III. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF NATIONALISM

Can this situation be maintained? There are many signs that we have reached the limit of what reality itself will tolerate. When

violence is done to the structure of things, it is persons who first resist or react; but there comes a second moment, and this is the crucial one, at which it is things themselves that can bear no more; and these now impose upon us, not indeed their will, but something even heavier, against which there is no appeal: their exigencies. Here I can only enumerate a few of the facts which are making the perpetuation of intellectual nationalism impossible.

In the first place, there is the consciousness of ignorance and backwardness into which the specialists in nearly all disciplines are beginning to fall. It is still possible to see a thick French treatise on psychology in which not even the names of Dilthey, Brentano, Köhler or Koffka appear; or an analogous German volume in which one would look in vain for the slightest allusion to Ribot, Bergson, Dumas, Janet or Lévy-Bruhl; and so in innumerable cases. There are plenty of works pretending to a pursuit of science based purely on the national bibliography. When one looks carefully into them, however, it becomes obvious that the authors cited in such works have actually drawn upon the whole field of European knowledge; but this fact is not openly avowed, and the European knowledge in question remains something second-hand, coloured by its medium. It is some years since people began to feel this attitude to be inadmissible, and now in nearly all European countries they are busy informing themselves, rather hurriedly, of what is known and thought in the others. Let it be stated that Spain sinned perhaps less than any other nation in this respect, during the half century that is now ending; and it is now rather the turn of other countries to learn from her, as is beginning to happen.

But the necessity of being up to date is not the only nor the deepest reason why intellectual nationalism is being left behind. The nations of Europe have begun to feel a growing lack of confidence in themselves. The majority of European men feel lost and perplexed. They look round them, and still come across the old familiar cliques, the old gestures, the old solutions. But no one now manages seriously to believe in them. For men have groped all round the boundaries of their world, and learnt by experience in momentous hours that really one hardly knows what to think. Noisy self-assertion has been succeeded by an awareness of crisis, by uncertainty, perhaps by dismay.

Public opinion in nearly all countries—especially the big ones—was long lulled by a belief in home superiority and self-suffi-



ciency. People trusted that national resources were enough, and managed with extremely vague ideas as to what actually went on over the frontier. The result is that today, as the external world penetrates to them, the *negative situation* I have described is invaded by surprise. The younger generations are making the discovery of 'the others'; they are beginning to realize that the ignorance in which they have lived up to now is grotesque; they feel themselves, not without shame, 'provincial'. And from this painful but healthy emotion I hope they may be able to pass, losing their shame, to another emotion, at once modest and proud: to consciousness of themselves as *provinciales*, as belonging, with full and limited dignity, to a province of the ancestral lands of Europe, living with the rest and having no mania for greatness, nor any claim to usurp the authority of the whole.

Finally, the gravity of the problems, the conviction that these are pressing and difficult to handle, and the loss of intellectual authority among the majority of those holding title to that function, more often because of what they have said than because of what they have not said—all this has determined the main lines of a desperate situation, in the face of which there is nothing for it but to stop gesticulating and get down to work. The European feels he has been shipwrecked; shipwrecked in a sea, of course, of doubts; but these doubts are also of such a character that it seems to him highly probable that he will see at any moment the very ground itself give way under his feet—in the most material and shattering sense of the phrase. In proportion as this conviction dawns upon him, the European feels the need of leaving on one side his fads, vanities and petulance so as to lay hold of all effective resources, wherever they come from, and to 'form a square'. This is exactly the situation we have reached in the last five years.

#### IV. THE REINTEGRATION OF EUROPE

There is thus imposed the need for the reintegration of Europe, in the order of thought, which is what interests us here. But we must point out first that it is not with preferences or desires that we have to concern ourselves, but with strict objective necessities: the reintegration may or may not in fact be achieved, for history is always problematical, but it is necessary and is postulated by things themselves; in the second place, although we are



dealing with thought and its intrinsic needs, this is not a matter belonging merely to a closed intellectual world. For the world of thought is not by nature a closed one; and the whole reality of Europe is already caught up in it.

I have already alluded to the fact that relations—if not a life in common, which is still difficult to achieve—are being re-established between the intellectual minorities of Europe. But this new *rapprochement* differs from that initiated thirty years ago in two ways. First, there is the fact that the old drawing together of intellectuals was chiefly determined by needs and interests belonging to their own work, and by the enjoyment and satisfaction it gave; it was characterized therefore by a certain ease and by a notable independence of the social environment. Secondly, the intellectual felt strongly the temptation to consider himself unbound in any case, to regard the fact that he belonged to a concrete nation as something accidental and secondary, and of course as having little to do with his work itself. The professionals of the intellect as a rule thought of themselves as at least in principle interchangeable, as cosmopolitans or citizens of the world; more immediately, of the world of the intelligence.

Things are now different on both sides. The new intellectual *rapprochement* has its starting point not so much in the exercise of intelligence itself as in the evidence that, for different historical reasons, it has become urgent. It is thus less threatened by frivolity and mere playfulness—though perhaps at the cost of something which is also essential: athletic enjoyment of the effort involved. As a consequence of this urgency, their relationship with the society to which they belong functions within intellectual groups in a more vital way, causing them to feel the pressures of society quite as powerfully as they feel their own ascendancy over it, or prestige. As for prestige, obviously nothing so lays one open to the lack of it as to want it too much. Of latter years we have seen repeated attempts made in many places to impose upon public opinion individuals or groups of individuals devoted more or less genuinely to intellectual work. These attempts drew upon the enormous resources of public power or of great social forces. Yet the result—one of the few comforting symptoms that the modern European can observe—has been almost always little more than null, and quite out of proportion to the means brought into play. Scarcely anyone unworthy of it has been successfully imposed upon us, and in the cases in which the beneficiaries of these pressures

have been men of worth, in the long run the figure they cut in society has rather been diminished by the performance.

The most serious part of our general problem concerns, however, not simply the intellectual's relationship to his own society, but the question of cosmopolitanism. One of the concepts most efficaciously studied by present philosophy is that of *situation*, and its discoveries in this line have, in general, acquired wide influence. Today the intellectual and his public feel, perhaps confusedly, but strongly, that they are conditioned by a concrete situation from which they neither can nor ought to try to escape. The intellectual is seen, then, as a man enlisted by his time and place in the world, and not as a mere mental apparatus functioning in the void. He feels himself therefore as radically belonging to an epoch, to a society, and in a more precise way to a nation. To be Spanish, French or German does not seem to be a matter of indifference, but quite the opposite: an inexorable individual destiny. Can this be a relapse into nationalism? No, for destiny is the contrary of the thing that forms the substratum of all nationalisms as we know them; namely, the belief that to belong to a nation is a grace, or a privilege frivolously granted and used. And besides, in analysing the whole situation in which he finds himself, the intellectual does discover the ineluctable fact that he belongs, as inescapably as he belongs to his own nation, to a wider community. The aim then must be neither 'nationalism' nor 'internationalism' in the sense of indifference, but a necessary articulation of the national (of *each* specific nation) with the supranational (more immediately, the European). It is in this form that today we visualize as an urgent enterprise the intellectual reintegration of Europe.

Obviously such an enterprise is not without difficulties. It runs into extensive obstacles which may well make it impossible. I shall limit myself to enumerating a few, and in the most concise way possible. Perhaps the one that carries the most general menace, if not the profoundest, is utopianism. By this I mean a double phenomenon, whose two components are very closely connected. It consists on one side in the belief that European intellectual unity can be magically restored by merely desiring it or at the most proclaiming it, without realizing that long and tenacious efforts are needed in order to re-create or create, as a primary aim, a whole system of specifically European habits; for without this all will be in vain. Its other component is a lack of precision as to the limits of Europe. To what extent does Russia, and the whole of eastern

Europe, belong to Europe? Up to what point must we or must we not keep account of countries outside the continent itself—America and the British Dominions chiefly—which were at least up to a certain date intellectually dependent on Europe, but which today have a problematical claim to independence?

The second obstacle I call *politicism*. This is a most grave phenomenon of our epoch. It is extremely complex, and consists in a shifting of the rôle of politics, which ought always to be a secondary one, into the foreground. Here I only want to touch on the aspect of it which concerns our theme. Briefly, we might say that politicism tries to impose a *conditioned* unification. What I mean can be illustrated by two examples of its working in the historical-political order. In the first five years of this decade we were subjected to insistent propaganda about what was called 'our new continental Europe' (a formula, by the way, in which every word is indeed heavy with meaning). In the second five years we meet the proposition that Europe must be united but must be socialist *besides*. Turning now to the intellectual order itself, we can see that here there is an attempt being made to unify Europe, but with the proviso that this must be done in the name of a given ideology or tradition. And so, with the issue decided in advance, we march boldly forward into the domain of the fictitious.

Looking closely, one will probably find in the willingness to accept such premises a factor intrinsically affecting the European mind in its social situation: mistrust of the intelligence, a lack of faith in the function of the intellectual, beginning, obviously, with the intellectual himself. Instead of a bold hand-to-hand facing of problems, undertaken without any need to know in advance where the business will end, and without cutting away the element of dramatic struggle from the task, men prefer to talk at length on questions whose very foundation is unsure. And so they hide with words their own real uncertainty, while the decisive point, the very thing that ought to be most radically probed, is taken for granted. I do not of course mean by this that all men in all walks of life ought to bring crucial matters into question; but I do mean that this is the function of theoretical thinking as such, and that as such it must be taken up or left alone. It is perfectly allowable not to practise such thinking, but it is not practising it to make it meaningless, substituting for it an innocuous imitation which pretends to pose questions it really takes as already solved.

The deepest root of all this is fear of the truth. It is a fear born

of the conviction that in any case we are living an illusion. But also, to bring things inexorably into question, and to refuse to be satisfied except with whatever actually forces itself upon us as true—this implies an immediate loss of our usual bearings; and we lack spirit enough to face it. We now have to see how this radical disease of our times threatens to dissolve into air the most important and valuable part of the intellectual patrimony of Europe.

## V. THE COMMON EUROPEAN PATRIMONY

How can one recommend such an attitude? Is it not rather the opposite that is needed? European culture has gone on creating a repertory of ideas, doctrines, styles. Isn't it precisely this insistence on questioning everything that dissipates and blows away all this capital, which has been treasured up through so many centuries?

I am not sure things are quite like that. I must confess that I too have some fear of ghosts from the past, and that nothing puts me off more than prescriptions. Nor do I share the immoderate enthusiasm for solutions felt by some. First, because I do not believe that everything has in fact a solution; and secondly, because it matters a good deal to me that solutions, when they are possible, should be solutions; that is to say that they should really resolve the question and not simply cover it up, leaving it to fester. No; the point is that when the goods we possess matter, when we have actually to live on them, it is necessary to be clear as to their condition. We must know what they consist of, and for that we need to make an inventory. For it is not enough for us to go on, secure in the belief that there exist certain materials, whose acknowledged quality leads us to presume that they can be of service to us in finding our way about our present life; we must question ourselves peremptorily as to the possibility and opportuneness of their use. In other words, we must rigorously find out what Europe has at her disposal; what is, in the last analysis, her common intellectual patrimony.

For me there is no doubt that what Europe properly *has*, what really and actually she possesses, is a repertory of *problems*. Problems, and not solutions, today constitute our common wealth and must be our starting point. If we try to define with some rigour our

situation—some time ago I did it rather minutely—we find everywhere the essentially problematical. For even the nature of beliefs, doctrines or solutions now shows itself within a general state of disorientation and perplexity, and even the way in which they fit into the whole perspective of our life is also problematical. We might say, stretching words, that today solutions themselves are problems, and not the lightest. We cannot just use them, make them serve us without more ado, but we can relentlessly make them give an account of themselves, we can make them prove their character and force as solutions, and then make them function afterwards as such, that is, make them fit into the total system of our problems. Nothing, then, is a solution *tout court*. Nothing can be automatically appealed to. Luckily or unluckily—that is another story—the truth can only exist for us *as proving true*.<sup>1</sup>

But it would be a serious mistake to interpret this situation as merely negative, even from the intellectual point of view. That would mean a lack of clarity as to what a problem is, and clarity is above all most urgent. Problems are not mere difficulties or ignorances. That they should have a dimension of ignorance and difficulty is one thing; but that this should exhaust their reality is another thing, and a quite different and erroneous one. Above all, we must keep in mind that problems are not things to which we can assign a place at will, but that every situation has problems of *its own*—and we must give all its force to this patrimonial possessive; in other words, our present problems have been *arrived at*, and in them the history of Europe exists in an operative and efficacious form. In a nutshell, they constitute the living, dynamic way in which this history has its present existence, much more than do finished works and solutions of every kind, for these latter are already results, precipitates, forms always partially preterite and inert. If Europe were not what she has been and is, she would not have *these* problems. It is in them therefore that she finds herself; and for her to turn her back on them and hold them as meaningless implies the gravest form of self-desertion and forgetfulness.

On the other hand, if things are looked at from the intellectual angle, problems are not at all negative, but quite the reverse. Their very existence as such and such problems, the fact of their being posed, is itself already something positive, and something of unmistakable intellectual substance. Never until now had philosophy acquired so clear an awareness of what a problem is and of how far

<sup>1</sup> *Problemdase*.



a problem of itself involves a form of knowledge and theory; perhaps because intellectual problems had never been so genuinely problematical, so essential and crucial, and so difficult merely to skirt. To begin with problems is not therefore to begin with nothing, but to set off in truth, and in the way best fitted to the very condition of the intelligence. For this reason, the ousting or disabling of European problems is the most refined betrayal of the substance of Europe and of the nature of the intellectual life.

Just because they have lost the 'exceptional' character they had in other, more comfortable epochs, in which problems looked like very limited unsafe zones on a fair-weather horizon, those of today show with special clearness their shape and connexion, and present themselves as a coherent *system*. For this reason everything that is authentic in European thought appears as unified—whatever the differences of content—by the common level on which questions are tackled; precisely because the common factor, the true factor of European unification, is that the sphere in which this mental effort is put forth is essentially problematical. By contrast, all unauthentic forms of intellectual work are always, in some respect, unmistakably out of harmony with the present. They reveal also an excessive eagerness on the part of the thinker to take as already solved some part or other of the system of problems which forms, as it were, his horizon. The result is that the system is invalidated at the roots and cannot now be even set out effectively.

We need, then, to regain possession of the system of European problems as our common property, as a patrimony that is truly historical and therefore actual and operative; as what we find before us and have to live with. This and no other is our inheritance, our *hacienda*: that is to say our *faciendum*, what we have to do, our task or enterprise; and at the same time, if we recall the original sense of the term, the very *substance* of Europe. But just as it is not enough for things to be present for us to say that we possess them, neither is it enough that our problems should simply stand there before us. We must take possession of this disturbing patrimony, we must become lords of this problem-estate. How is this possible?

With this we touch the most delicate point of the question. For it needs no effort to observe a certain perplexity as regards the concrete possibilities of fertile intellectual action. The symptoms of disintegration or of deadlock in thought, even in its most excellent representatives, are not few. Besides the problems of every



order, there is the additional one of how to handle them. A shrewd feeling for each problem and for its living and systematic connexion goes too often with a difficulty in propounding it. As a consequence we fall back on out-of-date forms of abstract thinking; or else we escape into tendencies which at bottom involve the renunciation of the principle that all questions are to be reduced to strictly conceptual terms, the real intellectual problem now being absorbed and lost in mere descriptions of dilemma-situations or states of soul. This means a crisis in method.

Europe has always been a genius at inventing methods. The great Greek idea bore fruit on European soil, where men have always succeeded, till now, in finding the route towards things, the way of penetrating into reality, whatever this reality might be and whatever the perspective in which it presented itself. For this reason the present wave of irrationalism covering Europe is surprising and alarming, although if one looks carefully it is apparent that we are really watching its ebb; and since it is departing from the scene of the present, it is now less anachronistic than it ever was before. The genesis of this irrationalism is not difficult to discover, and I have concerned myself with it more than once. Partially justified, as is everything that happens, its determining cause was a sharp vision of the reality of historical change and the consideration of real human needs. From this situation was born, about a century ago, its first shoot; at the end of the nineteenth century a new form of it had already acquired a certain hold; in the last twenty-five years—already out of its time—has come the third wave, which at first sight is threatening to submerge us. Art and politics, which are usually early risers, carried irrationalism to its furthest consequences, and have allowed us to see its trajectory completed. But the example offered by this trajectory, even though attractive, is not enough; for art today is problematical in an even deeper sense, touching its very possibility and its function in human life; and as for politics, the positive consequences of the breakdown of all that has been done in recent years can only be worked out when we have reached clarity at levels of historical-social reality which are deeper than politics and condition politics. It is necessary therefore to pose the question in the sphere of theory, in philosophy itself, where its roots are to be found.

The instrument given to man for penetrating by himself into reality is reason. But reality is multiform; and the particular forms of reason, the theory of which Europe has elaborated throughout

her history, are perhaps only suitable for the knowing of those facets of the real in view of which they were worked out. The great temptation towards irrationalism has always been the petrification of reason in any one of its special versions; and irrationalism in its turn has presented different countenances, according to the variety of reason from which it negatively proceeded. All historical phases of this kind have been crises of rationalism—of different rationalisms—masked beneath the appearance of a crisis of reason. From all of them a way out has been found when reason has been successfully made to purify and integrate itself, to become more itself, to the point of being able to give an account of itself.

This year there has just been completed the fourth centenary of the death of René Descartes, perhaps the most representative name of Europe. We seem to be a long way from him, not only because of the three hundred years which separate his date from ours, but even more so because in him there really began what in us is ending: the Modern Age, and what has been called Rationalism with a capital R. It is certain that we are far from holding as our opinions what Descartes thought, and that we have behind us the breakdown of many of the enterprises towards which he spiritedly and confidently steered. And to a large extent what is today in a state of crisis is precisely the world Descartes inaugurated, and the form of thought of which he was chief author. We can say, in extreme terms, that it is the Cartesian solution that is today our main problem. But after saying this, which is strictly true, we have the obligation not to stop there, because man is the one being who in this world cannot stop anywhere.

If we leave out of account the concrete content of the Cartesian innovation and confine our attention to its functional structure alone, we find that it consisted above all in a turning from received ideas to self-evident ones; and these self-evident ideas, since they originated within the individual, within the *undivided*, had necessarily to include their only justification in themselves. We however cannot be content with perceiving this functional scheme of Descartes, but have to adapt it to our own present situation. What we must do is to appeal from every idea, from every *interpretation*, to naked reality. As I once said, just as in Cartesianism it was doubt that was the instrument of the methodical return from received ideas to self-evident ones, so the organon of the return from interpretations to reality itself is history. In this sense, the lesson of Descartes is fully efficacious for us; and our situation, though

materially distinct from and even opposed to his, yet formally resembles it. We can talk of a 'functional Cartesianism' which would be the model for the intellectual task of the twentieth century.

With this the circle of our considerations is complete, and all possibility of faulty thinking removed. It is history that has been the principal cause of the dominant irrationalism, and of those two phenomena (as justified or interesting as they are confused and equivocal) called existentialism and historicism. And now, as always, we can get beyond this situation only by fixing firmly upon it, by taking it seriously and, instead of dodging it, carrying it to its furthest consequences. I have always thought that historicism can only be overcome by means of historicity; history must be taken in its integrity and true reality, which never stops short at any of its past forms, but sends us to the present, to ourselves; and it is then that we discover the essentially *systematic* structure of history, and its intrinsic *reason*. As in European problems there is enclosed, as we saw before, the history of Europe, out of which they were born, their adequate exposition presupposes the real and living use of historical reason. And so in this way, by remaining faithful to the situation in which he finds himself, European man is led ineluctably to take account of the unitary reality of Europe, seeing it from the concrete perspective of an individual life belonging to his own particular nation; at the same time he is led to discover the superior form of reason which will make it possible effectively to knit together again the intellectual life of Europe.

# EMMANUEL MOUNIER

By EUGENE LANGDALE

THE death of Emmanuel Mounier has been practically unnoticed in England. His personality was not of the kind that hits the headlines, and one did not expect to find obituaries in the popular press; but even the comprehensive columns of *The Times* had no room for the barest announcement. The tribute in the *Tablet* was all the more generous as the writer and Mounier could have shared little in common except the Catholic faith. The rest of the religious press seems to have completely ignored the death of one of the greatest Christian thinkers of our time.

Emmanuel Mounier has died in the full maturity of his powers, at the age of forty-five. He lived and he died a poor man—so poor indeed that his widow and children have been left destitute, and a group of the 'Friends of Mounier' has been founded to provide for them. He could have chosen a safe and lucrative academic career, leading eventually to a University professorship or a Chair in the *Collège de France*. He preferred instead to earn a precarious living as a writer, and in 1932 he founded the review *Esprit*, which for nearly twenty years has been a beacon light in the intellectual life of France.

*Esprit* reminds one in many ways of the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, and Mounier was the undoubted spiritual successor to Péguy. Yet one could hardly find a greater contrast between two men. Both indeed were brilliant sons of the French University system, and both wrote in a curious prose of their own, Péguy repetitiously, grinding in his point by sheer weight of alliterations, and Mounier laboriously, with a wealth of somewhat barbarous neologisms of his own invention. But here the resemblance ceases. Péguy came from Socialism to Catholicism, rediscovering the Faith through Joan of Arc and the Christian vocation of France. But he remained on the threshold, pointing the way to others but not entering the Church himself—except perhaps at the last moment, the night before he was killed. Mounier, on the other hand, never seems to have varied in his line of direction; he was always an obedient son of the Church and a frequent communicant of child-like fervour. Péguy was above all a poet, a townsman with a nostalgia for peasant France and a love of good craftsmanship—a kind of French William Morris with a strong splash of Chesterton; Mounier was essentially a philosopher, whose massive erudition could play upon all the keys of

human thought without ever falling into eclecticism. The reviews they edited showed a similar contrast. Péguy's *Cahiers* often consisted of long monologues by the editor, sometimes extending over several issues. *Esprit*, on the other hand, reflected the wide range and contacts of Mounier. Each number was a kind of dialogue, in which opposing views faced each other in complete freedom of discussion. A recent number of Marxism, for example, included a number of contributions from leading Communists and many pages of Marxist texts. One of its features was a 'Journal with two voices' expressing diametrically opposed views on contemporary events.

Yet it is true to say that the mantle of Péguy fell upon Mounier's shoulders. He did not try to imitate Péguy; he did better, and continued him. Just as Péguy gave to the young generations of the first decade of the twentieth century a new vision of Catholicism, after the ignominious politico-religious intrigues of the nineteenth, Mounier acted as the intellectual mentor to the young Catholics of the period between the two wars, after the condemnation of the *Action Française* in 1926 had dissipated the last ambiguities concerning the relationship of the Church and the extreme Right. By that time the beneficial effects of the breaking of the Concordat were beginning to be felt, and Catholics were emerging from the ghetto of lost causes.

It would, of course, be absurd to attribute to Mounier alone that great phenomenon of modern France, the re-entry of Catholics into the life of the nation. One is easily tempted to simplify the issues and to find the key to history in literary influences; only recently an English writer was attributing the whole of the French Catholic revival to Péguy and Léon Bloy. These great men undoubtedly played their part, but very much vaster if less spectacular forces were preparing the way; in fact the message of these prophets is only understandable against the background of Albert de Mun and the *Ralliement*, the Christian Trade Unions, the Social Weeks and the *abbés démocrates*—not forgetting the greatest force of all, Marc Sangnier and the *Sillon*, from which have flowed all the social and political movements inspired by French Catholicism—Popular Democracy, the Young Christian Workers, the Family Movements, the *Mission de Paris*, priest-workers, etc.

Mounier understood, encouraged and stimulated all these developments. Possibly his greatest friend was the famous priest-worker of Montreuil, the Abbé Depierre. At the same time he remained singularly detached, thoroughly *engagé*, yet aloof. He was a political philosopher who never joined a political organization, a sincere and ardent Catholic who never belonged to a denominational movement. And yet all turned to him for guidance and inspiration. Unlike many of the leading Catholic intellectuals of his country (including, for a time, Jacques Maritain) he had never succumbed to the blandishments of

authoritarianism, and his warnings on Fascism now seem to us singularly lucid. At the distance of a century, he links up with an older Christian democratic tradition, that of Ozanam, and like his great predecessor he urged his generation to welcome the 'new barbarians' and to make the cause of the people their own.

He paid the usual price for independence of judgement during the war, when *Esprit* was suppressed by the Vichy government. Soon after he was imprisoned. It was in prison—in *umbris*—that he started writing his most considerable work, the *Traité du Caractère*, and it was amid the struggle of the Resistance—in *loco quem Deus fecit*—that he completed it. This massive volume is a landmark in French psychological literature, and bears witness to the extraordinary range of Mounier's reading and his unusual capacity for concentrated hard work. It is also the best and fullest expression of Mounier's 'Personalist' philosophy, about which there have been so many misunderstandings. Mounier was a passionate believer in the dignity and autonomy of the human person; so much so that a number of critics have suggested that his concept of 'person' owed more to Kant than to St. Thomas Aquinas. But many would-be 'personalists' have been not a little astonished to find that Mounier was no fellow-traveller with them on the road to 'private enterprise'. His essay, *De la propriété capitaliste à la propriété humaine*, is probably the best analysis of the Christian notion of property in any language.

In his combat for the rights of man, in his strivings to reconcile the demands of the human person with the rights of the collectivity, Mounier faced attacks from the Right and the Left. Learned theologians accused him of being the spiritual father of the near-Communist 'Progressive Christians', while Communists ranked him as yet another 'Fascist beast and warmonger' for refusing to sign the Stockholm appeal. The truth is that he was the dupe of no one, but the friend of all, even of those who could share none of his beliefs. And all the while he bore with courage a secret, personal cross—the knowledge that his eldest daughter would always be a hopeless, incurable invalid.

He died suddenly of heart failure, brought on by overwork. The previous evening he had gone to rest in his usual high spirits. In the middle of the night his wife was awakened by a gentle groan. She turned round to see what was wrong—Emmanuel Mounier had passed away. The next morning they found on his desk, together with some notes for an article he was preparing, a cheque for five thousand francs, made out in the name of Abbé Depierre. This sum—almost a fortune for so poor a man—was destined to support the strikers at Montreuil in their struggle for a living wage. No gesture could sum up better the whole life, ideals and character of Emmanuel Mounier—*lux perpetua luceat ei*.



## BOOK REVIEWS

### SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

*La Doctrine Economique et Sociale de Karl Marx.* By Henri Bartoli. (Editions du Seuil.)

THOSE of us who from time to time essay an explanation of this or that point of Catholic social philosophy find a certain difficulty in stating what precisely are the implications of Catholic principles in terms of institutions, economic methods, and forms of social organization. Thus we find in this country an extraordinary polarization of Catholic social doctrine. At one extreme, we find the school associated with the names of the late Father Vincent McNabb and Eric Gill. Members of this school give at least the impression that they advocate a return to a society of peasants and craftsmen; and sometimes their doctrine is associated with a peculiar theory of agriculture rudely named by its critics 'muck and magic'. At the other extreme, some ably argue (often in the columns of *The Tablet*) that on the whole the development of capitalism in recent centuries is such that Catholics should, with minor reservations, approve it. This latter school offers an apologetic for a 'free society' not greatly different from the ingenious argument of Professor Hayek. Meanwhile, most Catholics rub along fairly well satisfied with the vague philosophy of the Welfare State upon which Conservatives, Liberals, and Socialists are agreed. Except on those points—education, some aspects of medical policy, the marriage laws—that, as they have often been instructed from the pulpit, conflict sharply with Catholic moral teaching, English Catholics in general seem thoroughly English in their empirical approach to questions of social and economic organization.

These attitudes are to some extent duplicated in Europe and the United States. There is not much evidence of a common mind in social philosophy, any more than there is general agreement on economic policy between, say, Herr Arnold and Herr Adenauer or between M. Bidault and the Catholic Right. The Christian Democratic parties are held together, not by a common social philosophy (even though all sub-

scribe to the teaching of the Encyclicals, these are so diversely understood and interpreted that they do not in practice provide a common social philosophy) but by a common concern that the Church should remain free to exercise her specifically religious mission. There can be no doubt that the inability of Catholics to state what their principles amount to in terms of social practice is a weakness. The problem is hard to solve in this country, for the number of Catholics expert in the social sciences and therefore well equipped to discuss these issues on the technical level is small; but in France and Germany, for example, there are many Catholic economists and sociologists from whose labours we may hope to gain a clearer sight of the bearing of Catholic principles on the problems of social theory and practice.

One important task is a critical revaluation of the work of those theorists outside the Catholic tradition who cannot be neglected, if only on account of the place they occupy in the estimate of the public. This task was splendidly accomplished in the case of Proudhon by Père de Lubac. M. Henri Bartoli, an economist of distinction and a Professor at the University of Grenoble, is excellently equipped to do the same for Marx. The work under review is a comprehensive survey of the social philosophy and economic theory of Marxism. Unlike many other academic economists, M. Bartoli is not content to reveal yet again, to the approving laughter of his colleagues, the famous contradiction between the Labour Theory of Value of the first volume of *Das Kapital* and the analysis of the mechanism of economic valuation in the third volume. He discusses Marx's theory sympathetically, suggesting that value and price represent two distinct though connected problems, and discerning within it elements that can be incorporated into a general theory of value and of crises—a general theory which, in spite of the work of Keynes, is perhaps still to seek. Rightly, M. Bartoli does not reduce the economic theory to a mere torso, but places it in the setting of Marx's philosophy and political doctrine. In particular he relates it to the key concept of 'alienation', or 'estrangement', which Marx took over from the Hegelians and put to new uses. The importance of this concept is often not seen, even by Marxists, and M. Bartoli's discussion is to be recommended as a most penetrating and illuminating exposition of the concept.

During what appeared to be the spring-time—it was in fact an Indian summer—of the *Front Populaire*, M. Jacques Madaule suggested that just as it was the task of the thirteenth century to reconcile Christian theology with Aristotelian philosophy, so it might be the task of Christian theologians in the twentieth century to perform the same office for Marxism. This judgement M. Madaule would probably not now wish to maintain. Certainly, this is not M. Bartoli's standpoint. He sees the function of Marxism as that of a corrective, in particular as

a corrective of the bloodless and sophistical variety of idealist philosophy that ruled French academic life, or rather divided this rule with Positivism, in the early years of this century. Unlike most English scholars M. Bartoli takes the philosophy of philosophers seriously; and in this he is perfectly realistic, for the philosophy of the schools does in France exercise a most potent influence upon social life. That in the middle of the twentieth century Catholic scholars such as Père de Lubac and M. Bartoli should be able to write and publish lively and sympathetic studies of socialist theory, without anyone supposing for a moment that their Catholicism is either compromised or attenuated, shows the richness and promise of the Catholic renaissance in France. We must hope that external political events will not strangle this renaissance; for if we are to work towards a theoretically profound and practically relevant philosophy of society, we shall need the clarity and energy of the French intellect.

J. M. CAMERON

#### MENÉNDEZ PIDAL AND 'THE TWO SPAINS'

*The Spaniards in their History: An Analysis of Spain's National Characteristics.* By Ramón Menéndez Pidal. Translated with a prefatory essay on the author's work by Walter Starkie. (Hollis & Carter. 16s.)

THREE years ago there was published in Madrid the first volume of a monumental history of Spain, which is being written by various scholars under the general editorship of Don Ramón Menéndez Pidal. Four volumes have so far appeared, carrying the story of Christian Spain down to the end of the Visigothic period, and that of Moorish Spain down to the fall of the Caliphate of Córdoba. The first volume was prefaced by a long Introduction by Menéndez Pidal which, translated by the Director of the British Institute in Madrid, is the subject of this review.

The name of its distinguished author sufficiently guarantees the extraordinary interest and importance of this essay. During the greater part of a life, now in its eighty-second year, devoted to philological, literary and historical research, Don Ramón Menéndez Pidal has been the undisputed master of Hispanic studies and must be acclaimed as one of the very greatest figures in world scholarship today. In the enormous list of his published writings there is not one that does not

illuminate decisively the subject it deals with. In all there is apparent a massive erudition, never marred by pedantry and always enriched by a singularly acute mind deeply imbued with the highest values of human life and civilization. This mind, with its faculties unimpaired by age, has now been brought to bear on what Spaniards, during the last half century, have called the 'Problem of Spain'.

In his long introduction of 114 pages Professor Starkie does full justice to Menéndez Pidal's scholarly achievement. By summarizing the results of his researches into the epic-ballad tradition, Professor Starkie writes what is almost, in effect, a short history of Spanish literature. But interesting though this is bound to be, one may perhaps be permitted to question its immediate relevance to the particular essay on the Spaniards in their History to which it serves as an introduction. Only the last eleven pages of this introduction deal with the essay itself, and these do not really serve to place it as adequately in its context as the English reader might desire.

The state of mind and the feelings produced in Spaniards by the nature and quality of their national civilization and tradition have, in modern times, had profound repercussions in the political sphere. Spain has been considered a 'problem', and to be a Spaniard has been a 'problem'. Spain is the only country in modern Europe that has been a world-power and that has dropped from that pinnacle to a third-rate status among the countries of the world. Not only has she been unable during three centuries to come near her former status, but for the latter half of this period she has been torn by political strife and civil wars, subject to an instability that has prevented her from recovering national prestige. The consciousness of national decline has been dominant in Spaniards, but in different ways according to whether the emphasis has been placed on the greatness of the past or on the humiliation of the present. The conviction that they were a decadent nation became an obsession with some. The cause of this decadence was to be found in the long domination of the Church. Bound intransigently to medievalism Spain had set her face against the development of the modern world, and this had led to stagnation and the complacency of ignorance. The decadence itself consequently began with the sixteenth century and embraces the whole period of Spain's imperial power, a period of 'greatness' which had, in fact, been only a hollow sham. There was nothing in Spain's past after 1500 to be proud of, nothing, or practically nothing, to admire in her culture. (This neurotic obsession with decadence has led some writers to attribute its beginnings to the Visigoths. Spain has been decadent for fifteen centuries. Why, asks Menéndez Pidal, stop there? Why not go back to the Iberians? The same seeds of 'decadence' can quite well be found there too.)

Other Spaniards, however, seeing that the period of Spain's political and cultural greatness had been the period when she had led the Counter-Reformation in the fight against heresy and when the alliance between Church and State had been closest, concluded that the continuance or restoration of this close alliance was an indispensable condition for any revival of greatness in the future. For them, the real decadence of Spain began in the eighteenth century and had increased *pari passu* with the growth of an anti-Catholic and anti-religious movement that had disrupted Spanish unity and had struck at the heart of Spanish tradition by despising all its achievements. The men who formed this latter movement were Spaniards in name but not in spirit; they were, in fact, the 'anti-Spain'. This anti-Spain, for its part, looked with contempt upon the other half of the nation as the *cavernícolas*—the cave-dwellers. The ferocity of this mutual intolerance led to civil war.

Several modern writers have attempted to go rather deeper into the 'problem of Spain' than by this over-simplified division into sheep and goats. In particular, some have sought in the 'national psychology' for the diagnosis of the Spanish malady. All this literature is the context of Menéndez Pidal's essay. Several of his findings as regards the Spanish character corroborate those of previous writers; others are new or are given a new emphasis. But what most distinguishes this essay is that each step of its argument has beneath it the foundation of a solid historical learning. No statement is made without the support of some evidence, and for many statements the evidence is continuous, throughout the centuries, from Roman times.

The main point in his analysis of the Spanish character is that Spaniards have been characterized throughout history by a spirit of austerity, a mental, moral and physical sobriety. This, both individually and collectively, can be a virtue or a defect. It can produce either a self-sacrificing generosity or a disinclination to bestir oneself and to think ahead. It can produce either a spirit of endurance or public passivity in the face of an incompetent and corrupt conduct of public affairs. The attitude of 'it doesn't matter' can be applied not only to hardship and danger but also to work. The Spaniard can face up resolutely to arduous enterprises but finds it difficult to stand the monotony of commonplace daily routine. There is a relative indifference to temporal well-being and material progress, but a strong sense of personal dignity.

This has been said before, but never so well. Where Menéndez Pidal breaks new ground, and leads us into the heart of his argument, is in his contention that this Spanish sobriety also produces an indifference to, even dislike of, anything new. He quotes the definition of *novedad* given by a Spanish seventeenth-century lexicographer: 'Some-



thing new and unaccustomed. It is wont to be dangerous because it means changing what has been sanctioned by ancient usage.' Many of us nowadays may feel that this is an admirable definition, and that here may lie the hidden strength of Spain. Menéndez Pidal does indeed insist that traditionalism as such is not a defect but a positive virtue, and he explains how it helped to produce a fine and distinctive culture; but at the same time he insists that the abuse of traditionalism—an uncritical contempt of anything new—has been a constant and serious defect in Spanish life and history. One of his most illuminating sections is the evidence he adduces, from the sixteenth century onwards, to show that dislike of foreign travel has been endemic among Spaniards. This is a sign of the dangerous tendency to isolation which, all through Spanish history, has been at war with the spirit of innovation. When innovation has been rooted in tradition, as in the sixteenth century and part of the seventeenth, then cultural activity has been continuous, extensive and fruitful. But when, on the one hand, tradition has isolated itself from innovation, and, on the other hand, innovation has turned against tradition, then there has been a lack of consistency and continuity in both cultural and political life.

This leads Menéndez Pidal to the 'Two Spains'—that of tradition and that of innovation. Both are good, both are essential to Spain, but they must work in fruitful harmony. Since, however, each has for the last century and a half been wrapped in its own exclusiveness, bitterly contemptuous and fiercely intolerant of the other, he has hard words to say of both. And above the clash of intolerance and violence that has been the history of modern Spain there rises his moving plea for concord among Spaniards, and his profession of faith in 'toleration, that priceless fruit of the noblest peoples, not to be destroyed by the collectivist extremism now spread over the world'. A profession of faith, too, in an 'integral Spain', which 'will not be a Spain of the right or of the left' but of both.

Two organs necessary for existence must enter into function. First, a traditional Spain unshakable in her Catholicism which, hating violence, not only avoids coercion of the dissident, but shares with them in brotherly fashion the interest taken by the State in the common welfare; thus offering to the innovators, as Balmes suggested, possibilities of evolution and reform. Secondly, a new Spain, full of the spirit of modernity, non-isolationist, interested in foreign standards but not idly subject to them: her originality rooted, as Unamuno said, in the 'eternal', not in the 'historic'. She will look on the past achievements of her people not, as did Castelar, under the similitude of a funeral shroud, nor with merely cold respect, but with affectionate interest in that Spain of old which shed such brilliance on important periods of universal history.



There is no one in Spain today more fitted to make this plea; no one whose voice, heard as it is with respect by both Spains, is more likely to be listened to; no one who, by his work in revealing, free from any partisan bias, the positive and enduring values of Spanish civilization, has done more to offer Spaniards a basis of unity in a common understanding of and pride in their past.

This essay presupposes in the reader a certain knowledge of Spanish history; many of its finer points may be missed by one who lacks that knowledge. Professor Starkie provides a few explanatory footnotes, but these are very brief and not always as informative as many readers might desire. Not the least fascinating aspect of Menéndez Pidal's essay is the new angle from which it approaches each of the different periods of Spanish history, indicating indirectly how that whole history should be re-written. But a review must disregard much that is suggestive in this essay and concentrate on its main argument.

A few slips have been noted, which should be corrected in a later edition. In the note on p. 151 the 'fifteenth century' should be the nineteenth. The King of Portugal was never actually married to Juana la Beltraneja, as stated in the note on p. 160. 'In the west or the west' occurs on p. 186. I have not the Spanish original at hand, but surely 'of Recared' should be added to the end of this sentence on p. 243: 'the triumphant republicans declared that the history of Spain had been a mistake from the days of the conversion'.

A. A. PARKER

### THE GIFFORD LECTURES

*Christianity and Civilization.* By Emil Brunner. Gifford Lectures, 2 vols. (James Nisbet & Co. 10s. per vol.)

THE English have always had a name for low thinking. They dislike metaphysical speculation. 'When we see [as Hume says] that we have arrived at the utmost extent of human reason, we sit down contented; though we be perfectly satisfied in the main of our ignorance and perceive that we can give no reason for our most general and most refined principles beside our experience of their reality.' No doubt there is a strain of indolence and cowardice in the national empiricism. Occam's razor was a labour-saving device and so was the Reformation. The Statute of Uses was intended to save trouble and money. The colonies were an expedient, not a principle, and the Whig Revolution useful not glorious. John Locke and John Wesley both looked for 'results'. Swift

and Burke equally distrusted universals. In this island we have always lived down to our securities and up to our opportunities and thought ourselves virtuous in so doing. 'Pictures of perfection,' said Jane Austen, the parson's daughter, 'make me feel sick and wicked.' And there is virtue in this antiseptic humility. It may diminish our faith, but it has saved us from ideology. We had our David Hume to set against the German Hegel, our positivists to remind us that language ought to mean some thing. We preferred language and morals at the level of common sense, and government in the hands of shrewd men who gave no reasons but experience.

It may be this national empiricism which makes it hard for Englishmen to appreciate the German use of abstract nouns and abstract sentences. Take two instances from Dr. Brunner:

Material being is merely quantitative being. An objectivist understanding of truth expresses itself therefore not merely in terms of practical materialism, but also in a general quantification of all life, as it may be seen in the craving for records in sport, in pride in the growth of cities of millions of inhabitants, in respect for multi-millionaires, in admiration for great political power. Reverence for the quantum is, so to speak, the new version of the worship of the golden calf. It is an inevitable consequence of the objectivist conception of truth.

And again:

The Christians of almost all centuries have been guilty of a one-sided, false spiritualism which neglected the daily bread for the spiritual bread and by a false monastic or puritan disparagement of the body and its impulses brought about the revolt of an ill-treated human nature. . . . If the modern age is characterized by a false secularism at this worldliness, traditional Christianity certainly has to accept the verdict of a false other-worldliness which, in its interest in the eternal life, forgot the task of this earthly life. And finally whilst it is true that the unity of the truly personal and the truly communal is grounded in the Christian revelation taken in its original truth, empirical Christianity has failed to a large extent to prove this unity practically.

The first sentence seems (to this English reader) pure tautology. Dr. Brunner like many other Christian preachers regards the love of size, of enormous wealth, of political power as forms of materialism and materialism as reverence for the quantum which in his vocabulary is another name for 'objectivist understanding of truth'. And the only reason why the tautology seems to mean something is that he uses the word 'objectivist' in a sense of his own, as a synonym for thinking in

quantity rather than 'value'. The second passage is cast in the form of history and as history would have to be dismissed as untrue except for certain aspects of Greek and Lutheran Christianity—false especially of monks and puritans. And what would be meant by 'non-empirical Christianity'? But the historical appearance only conceals the ethical intention. Dr. Brunner is not really talking about monks or puritans. It would be irrelevant to draw pictures of Cluny and Farfa or of monkish industry and art or even to mention Chaucer's monk or the opulence that caught the eye of shrewd men in the days of Albert Achilles and Henry VIII. He is not thinking of the Bank of England, of the English middle-class or even of Joseph Butler. What is he thinking of? Of sin, the sin that besets fallen man and from which there is no salvation but through the Incarnate Word. It would be difficult to maintain the thesis—nor does Dr. Brunner wish to maintain it—that Christians have ill-treated human nature, disparaged the body or neglected daily bread more conspicuously than non-Christians; but Christians being human have fallen short of the glory of God and must confess their failure.

The importance of these lectures lies in their context and occasion. The revival of theological Protestantism seemed to the outside world to stress the Montanist aspect of Reformation theology and the question was raised, not unjustly, whether the 'theology' of crisis had anything to say to natural reason and natural man. The heroic resistance offered to Nazidom and all its works by the Confessing Church is no answer, for Montanism is a faith for martyrs. Not the heroic but the normal, not faith but common-sense is the frail and problematic factor. 'The Christian conception of time,' says Dr. Brunner, 'permits and even obliges us to partake in temporal happenings with the utmost intensity—the picture presented by the New Testament being usually that of an athlete on the race-course spending his last energy to reach the goal—and at the same time to be free from the haste and over-excitement created by the panic of the closed door.' That is not, however, exclusively New Testament doctrine: it is all in Plato. 'But at the same time the life-feeling of the Christian is not dependent on whether or not this earthly goal is reached. He knows that whatever he can do for the realization of God's will is at best something relative. . . . His true ultimate hope is not based on what can be achieved in temporal history, but upon that realization of the divine purpose which is neither dependent on man's action, nor happens within time.' And that doctrine is more explicitly stated by Hegel than by any Biblical writer. In his doctrine of time and of the human person, Dr. Brunner, states once more the Protestant orthodoxy. 'God has created time together with the world. He has set a beginning to time and will set an end of time. . . . Between these two points, the start and the finish, something happens

which even for God is real and significant. There is history, an individual and a universal human history in which God is infinitely interested. He is so intensely concerned with this history that He not only looks down on the scene of human life like an interested spectator, but He Himself intervenes in it. Even more, at a certain point in this time-process, He himself enters the scenery of temporal life; He the eternal appears in the shape of a historical person and, as such, performs, once and for all the decisive act of history. The incarnation of the word of God is at once the insertion into time of the eternal God: when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His son'. 'And in Him He revealed unto us the eternal secret of His will.'

It is not difficult to discern the difference between that doctrine of the Incarnation and the doctrine of the Catholic Church—between the 'insertion' or 'inruption' of the eternal God into time and the assumption by God of human nature. Nor can anyone fail to mark the overwhelming importance in Protestant and above all in Lutheran theology of the 'word' and the 'revelation'. They are the supreme sacrament. They belong to the vocabulary of gnosis rather than to that of *ousia* or hypostasis. We might trace the contrasted history of Catholic and Protestant religion from that profound and inherent antithesis. The heart of Dr. Brunner's theory of Christian civilization is his emphasis on creativeness, and the word of God is the creative fact. 'A divine *I* calls me *Thou* and attests to me that I, this individual man, being here and being so am seen and called by God from eternity. This dignity of human personality is not grounded in an abstract general element in all men, namely reason, but individual personality as such is the object of this appreciation because it is deemed worthy of being called by God.' Again, it is the word, the call of God. Such, indeed, is Lutheran orthodoxy. But it is not necessarily Christian or Trinitarian. Adam and Moses, Samuel and Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah heard that call. Nor is there room in the I-Thou doctrine for an adequate account of Man—for 'that universal human history in which God is infinitely interested'. It is not the same as individual human history which is in effect Dr. Brunner's real concern. The theological heart of the doctrine is an individualism which cannot reach the concept of civilization and society but as a condescension or an after-thought. It was so that Harnack felt the chill of legality when the Church became a world institution instead of a group of disciples in heaven.

It is true indeed that God did call me, the individual man, being here and being so, and called me from eternity, true that He numbers the hairs of my head and knows every sparrow that falls to the ground and clothes the grass of the field which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven. But He called me Man, and all the constituents of my humanity were implied in that vocation. In that divinely constituted humanity as

it is really human and not only as it is consciously Christian must be sought the meaning of such words as civilization. The 'general element in all men' is not 'abstract': one aspect of that 'general element' is that all men are individuals, but the 'general element' is precisely the stuff of all that Dr. Brunner can validly predicate in the second series of lectures. His generalizations would not lapse so frequently into tautologies, or stray through unconvincing memories of Hegelian sociology if he really believed in them. He would not be tempted to such facile predicates as for example, 'Technics in itself is no problem for the Christian man. As long as technics is subordinate to the human will, and human will is obedient to the divine will, technics is neutral and as a means of good will is itself good.' If he had done justice to the 'general element in all men' he would have observed that technics of its nature cannot be neutral, that its nature is to be not subordinate to the human will in that individual sense of human which seems (and only seems) to simplify his problems, that it does not subsist within the I-Thou relation. Technics, in its modern sense, means nothing but as 'quantification'. It is 'objectivist' in Dr. Brunner's sense and it presupposes large areas of humanity which cannot be directly related to the individual will. Nor is it enlightening to dispose of the 'mass' civilizations that have created mass industries as inevitably doomed to totalitarianism. 'When, for instance, a country rejoices over the growth of a city of millions of inhabitants, this is as stupid as if someone were to rejoice over the growth of a cancer. Giant cities are merely symptoms of autonomous technical growth which finally leads to destruction.' But though the Epicurean in all of us may rejoice to hear our dislike so vigorously put, the sentence implies a determinism which has no place in Dr. Brunner's creed, and the empirical Englishman who endures one such city would rejoice to find his way out of it. But the fact is there, the fact that God called each I in all those millions: the growth was not autonomous: but neither was it subject to the human will.

'And he divided unto them his living (*ousia*).'<sup>1</sup> So it is written in the parable. In other words, not only are men real but so is the material they handle and so is the history that they make of it. Dr. Brunner says that 'by this incarnation or "intemporation" of the word of God, time has been charged with an immense intensity. It has become a time of waiting, of decision and probation. Thus history has become interesting as a theme even for the thinker.' There again is the idealist. The word of God has become incarnate and so history is 'interesting as a theme'. It is just so that Dr. Brunner seems to handle 'the themes' of his second series: Technics, Science, Tradition and Renewal, Education, Work, Art, Social Custom and Law, Power, the Christian Idea of Civilization—about fifteen pages each—showing how human effort fails and faith

prevails. His method never varies and it works with such ease that even without logical analysis the reader is aware that the predicates are only verbal. Sometimes he is betrayed into palpable misconceptions. For example he says that 'it is the greatness and the delight of art to be perfection: it is its limitation to be merely imaginary perfection. . . . Its essence is to be imaginary, its danger is that imaginary perfection may be confounded with real perfection. Art then becomes a substitute for religion.' There is an ancient alliance between the prophet and the iconoclast. But Dr. Brunner's attempt to reconcile art and true religion invokes one of the earlier and simpler heresies of idealism, again because he does not take his topic seriously. There can be no delight in a perfection which is not real and Bach who provides the examples did not give his life to 'playing perfection'. Nor is it the essence of any existent thing (like the Double Violin Concerto) to be imaginary. Nor does art necessarily or always aim at perfection as such. But it is the habit of idealism to identify reality with deity and hence either to deny the title of real to all that is not religion or to give the name of religion to all experience.

The heart of the confusion, and of the verbal plausibility which Dr. Brunner uses so freely is deep in the Reformation theology. The Lutheran doctrine of faith transferred the weight of theology from 'being' to 'knowing', from the objective *esse* to the subjective assurance, from substance to state of mind, from sacrament to word. It thus directed all the attention upon the believer and regarded faith as a condition of soul. The Faith once for all delivered appeared thus to be an abstraction or a formula. But so in due course did everything else that could not be resolved into an I-Thou relation. There was something illusory, some temptation of the Deceiver in all that was not theologically significant. The Incarnation was simply the consummate I-Thou communion of God and the individual; it was not a union of natures but the word, a realization of meaning. In that sense and for that reason idealism sprang from the Protestant piety. The question whether the Protestant revival can be anything more than a mystical movement, can really conceive a civilization, depends on its ability to transcend this inherent gnosticism and to draw from the realism of the Scriptures the certainty which sceptical empiricists have held at the cost of their religious faith. Can the prophet descend from the mountain without breaking the commandments?

T. S. GREGORY



## THE NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE

*The Nature of the Universe.* By Fred Hoyle. (Basil Blackwell, Oxford. 5s.)

TWENTY years ago popular interest in cosmology was aroused by the writings of Jeans and Eddington in which both the nature and structure of the Universe were described in terms compatible with the new conception of atomic and quantum physics and of the theory of relativity.

The publication of over 250,000 copies of Jeans' *Mysterious Universe* within a few years was an indication of the reawakening interest in the relation of man to the Universe as a whole, and in the metaphysical implications arising out of this new knowledge. Subsequent developments in atomic and cosmic physics have helped to maintain interest in science and scientific achievement, with the result that Fred Hoyle's series of broadcast talks on the nature of the Universe delivered earlier this year, and now being repeated, have been widely followed and appreciated.

The book under review is an almost exact presentation of the original broadcast scripts, to which some additional information is added in notes at the end. The subject matter deals with the changes that have taken place in cosmology since the time of Jeans and Eddington; it is largely a personal interpretation of Mr. Hoyle, who is a lecturer in mathematics at Cambridge, and is an authority of high standing in theoretical physics and in astronomy. If he does not possess the light touch in writing of either Jeans or Eddington, he has a vigorous and forceful style and, so long as he confines himself to scientific matters, he handles his material in a manner that stimulates interest in the topics under discussion.

In an opening chapter on 'The Earth and Nearby Space' interest is immediately aroused on reading that within our apparently solid earth there is a fluid core, of about 3,000 miles diameter, probably of the same composition as that of the surrounding rocky shell; that but for a few miles of atmosphere above our head we should be frozen as hard as a board every night, and that there are rather more than a million stars in the milky way, possessing planets on which we might live without undue discomfort; an estimate far in excess of that made by Jeans. Mr. Hoyle, in passing, refers to the conflict between Galileo and the Church, in which, despite his refusal to accept any apologia for the attitude of the latter, he must surely agree that there was no denial of truth, but only a misconceived opposition of truths from different sources?

The account of solar and stellar energy that follows is full of interesting and new ideas mostly linked up with modern nuclear theory. It is interesting, for example, to learn that if there were no generation

of energy within the sun, the loss of energy by radiation from the surface would cause a very slow contraction leading to a heating-up process by compression, and a consequent increase in brightness. A lucid account of the nuclear sources of solar energy leads to the conclusion that, in the absence of extensive disturbances, the supply of hydrogen as nuclear fuel will maintain the sun for 50,000,000,000 years, but that after about one fifth of that time it will be getting too hot for our comfort. Here again the new cosmology conflicts with that of Jeans, in whose theory of the dying sun life must ultimately be frozen off the earth. There follows an account of the size and density of the red giant stars, of atomic energy, and of the hydrogen bomb, in which the proton-tritium reaction is considered to be the process involved.

Subsequent portions of the book deal with questions of a dynamic character such as the origin and evolution of the stars and of the earth and planets. There is a very clear and readable account of the wheel-like structure of our own galaxy which has a radius of 60,000 light years and a circumference so vast that the solar system moving at 2,000,000 miles per hour makes a round trip in 200 million years. The galaxy contains an interstellar gas, mainly of hydrogen, in an extremely rarefied condition and there is a description of its condensation first into clouds, each of which by a process of further condensations produces the dense type of condensation that corresponds to a star. As the star mass formed moves through the interstellar gas its gravitational force pulls in gas from far and wide and as it moves through the gas it leaves a huge empty tunnel behind it. There is a most interesting discussion on the width of the solar tunnel deduced from the climatological history of the earth, which it is suggested may point to a solution of the problem of the cause of the Ice Age, also of the effects of the possible widening of the tunnel due to changes that are constantly taking place in the motion of the interstellar gas.

In dealing with the origin of the earth and planets it is shown that the composition of the earth is incompatible with the theory first forwarded by Jeans that earth and planets were torn from the sun by tidal action due to the close approach of a star. According to the new cosmology, a star which once moved around the sun exploded with extreme violence in the manner of the supernovae. So great was the explosion that all the remnants were thrown a long way from the sun with the exception of a tiny wisp of gas, out of which our planets condensed. It is estimated that one supernova occurs every two or three hundred years, at which rate there must have been more than 10,000,000 explosions since the oldest stars were born. Mr. Hoyle concludes that his previous figure of 1,000,000 habitable planets within the Milky Way is possible, which, however, after allowing for all uncertainties, he reduces to a minimum of 100,000.

The final chapter closes with the nature and origin of the vast numbers of other galaxies, and of the spectroscopic evidence for their recession at speeds up to some 100,000,000 miles per hour! Galaxies lying at over twice the distance of the furthest ones that can actually be observed have speeds actually exceeding that of light, and the author employs an ingenious analogy in order to show how this can be reconciled with the general theory of relativity.

The main criticism which can be made against Mr. Hoyle's presentation of so much original and interesting material is the certainty that he attaches to the conclusions reached, and the conviction with which he affirms that there is little more to be said in the whole matter. To the question, 'Is it likely that any astonishing new developments are lying in wait for us?' he replies: 'It may surprise you to hear that I doubt whether this will be so. . . . By and large, I think that our present picture will turn out to bear an appreciable resemblance to the cosmologies of the future.' Such faith is hardly in keeping with the prevailing attitude in science, particularly in physics, in which no theory, however successful, is accepted as final. Mr. Hoyle himself has shown that the cosmology of twenty years ago is no longer tenable; may not further research necessitate drastic modifications in his own theories?

Finally, it is to be hoped that in future editions he will either omit, or else completely revise, the final sections of the book, in which he goes sadly astray when he ventures to deal with what he considers to be the Christian conception of man's existence after death. Both modern psychology and religion, he says, are agreed that if the something we call mind does survive death then it must have some physical connexions, and must be capable of physical detection. Mr. Hoyle does not explain all this, and it is certainly most difficult to understand what he means by 'physical connexion' in this sense, or how there could be 'physical detection'; indeed, to demand physical detection is to revert to the older view, now completely abandoned by scientists and philosophers, that to be real a thing must necessarily come within the range of scientific analysis.

Again, when he says 'all that Christians offer me is an Eternity of frustration' he is affirming somewhat naïvely that the Christian belief implies mere survival of the individual. Actually individual survival and ultimate communion with God through Christ is the basis of the Christian conception of the life after death and, perhaps, Mr. Hoyle has some dim, if confused, realization of this when, in conclusion, he adds, 'What I would choose would be an evolution of life whereby the essence of each of us becomes welded together into some vastly larger and more potent structure.'

J. A. TEEGAN

## KIERKEGAARD

*Introduction to Kierkegaard.* By Régis Jolivet. Dean of the Faculty of Theology in the Catholic University of Lyons. Translated by W. H. Barber. (Frederick Muller, 15s.)

PÈRE JOLIVET makes Kierkegaard as intelligible as it is possible to make a thinker who on principle refused to submit his intuitions to the scrutiny and interpretation of reasoning. Those who wish to know what sort of man was this Christian existentialist a century before existentialism and what was the message he proclaimed could not do better than read this most illuminating volume. The author has provided the clues which enable us to follow Kierkegaard's journeys through the obscure and tortuous labyrinths of a mind powerful and rich but lacking the sanity and serenity of mental and spiritual health. For, in our view at least, Kierkegaard was incapable of a sustained directness. Many of his works are pseudonymous, the utterance surely of hypostatized fragments of his own personality. Each pseudonym, as Père Jolivet says, denotes one of these. When he had convinced himself rightly that he was no fit husband for Regina Olsen—for this self-tormented spirit could have made no woman happy—instead of telling her the truth frankly, he must needs, to save her pain as he oddly believed, pose as a heartless man who had trifled with her affections. Nor was this all. He decided to take the public into his confidence and wrote at length about his perverse method of handling a situation in itself perfectly simple.

At times revolted by Luther's coarse unfairness to the Catholic religion and by his contempt for good works and for the pursuit of Christian perfection, Kierkegaard seems on the road to the Church. At others he pushes to the utmost Luther's fideism; for Kierkegaard faith is in reason's teeth, faith is in the absurd, and this repeats in other words Luther's disparagement of reason. If he exercises today an influence he never wielded in his lifetime, the explanation surely is that an irrationalist appeals to an age which has largely despaired of reason.

Often when Kierkegaard intends to state a truth he has perceived, he distorts the statement of it. For example the truth that God employs suffering to destroy self-will and replace it by the complete surrender is stated in language so paradoxical as even to sound blasphemous, though of course not so intended. 'Christianity exists because there is hatred between God and men. God hates all existence. To be a Christian means that you will be tortured in every way. The best thing is that you should have an inexhaustible fund of inventions for torturing yourself.' Such utterances are definitely morbid. Certainly Kierkegaard was a mighty and profound spirit who revolted against an

environment of self-satisfied, comfortable and smug religion, and confronted it with the imperative demands of the Gospel. Even so, while his funds held out he lived, it seems, a life at least as luxurious as those of the Christians he denounced. And indeed to do so was probably a psychological necessity to render supportable the interior asceticism of his life though it was also a concession to the 'aesthete' he had renounced. While denouncing dialectic for Hegel's employment of it, he propounds himself a dialectic—his law of three stages, aesthetic, ethical and religious—more concrete indeed and of experience rather than thought, but in our opinion quite as artificial as Hegel's. Nor should he have identified the aesthetic life with the life of sensual pleasure. Though the intuition and expression of beauty is of an order inferior to that of religious life, it is of a higher order than the indulgence of sensual pleasure. One wonders why it is that so many religious people tend to disparage unduly what one might call the middle values—art for example of philosophy.

Frankly we do not see what Catholics, possessed as they are of an integral Christianity as comprehensive as it is profound, and with the poise of health, can learn from so perverse a genius. But since Kierkegaard exercises the influence he does upon so many of our religious contemporaries, we should not be unacquainted with his views. This admirable exposition enables us to make this acquaintance without fumbling a long and weary way through a number of obscure and elusive volumes. For this we are greatly indebted to the author.

E. I. WATKIN

## POETRY AND HUMANISM

*Poetry and Humanism.* By M. M. Mahood. (Jonathan Cape. 16s.)

THE modern world, the world of man's passivity before a mechanized nature, began at the Renaissance. Yet that age saw also the growth of a new confidence in human creativeness and activity, a lust to expand which we can feel as much in the Spanish mystic yearning for the 'Indies of God' as in the *sourire du pâle Vasco*. To reconcile this new desire, this new self-consciousness, with the conception of man's nature and destiny found in Christianity, was perhaps the central problem of the religious humanists of the seventeenth century. Miss Mahood's book, though primarily an essay in literary criticism, continually

touches upon this matter. She is concerned to defend the possibility of a humanism which does not exhaust itself in a fierce dialectic of self-destruction: the possibility, in fact, of something akin to the 'true humanism' desiderated by M. Maritain. And she does this by showing how the great English poets of the seventeenth century, notably Donne and Milton, were already aware, in their own terms and frame of reference, of this humanist problem.

The feeling that there *was* a problem, and the attempt to say what it was and to propound a solution, first fully emerged in Europe in the fifteenth century. Miss Mahood refutes over-simplified ideas about what happened then. Many people, she says, 'speak . . . as if every European who, in 1452, unquestioningly accepted the Ptolemaic world-picture as the limit to his observation and the decrees of the Catholic Church as a check to his metaphysical inquiry, had by 1454 been transformed into a self-seeking individualist, ready to reject all Christian dogma for a Swinburne-like glorification of pagan thought and art' (p. 17). Enthusiastic mediaevalists have launched attacks on 'the Renaissance' with this tacit premiss in their argument, and Miss Mahood shows how it derives from the view sometimes ascribed (not quite correctly) to Burckhardt, that the Renaissance was a straightforward triumph of light over darkness. It seems to me that a full discussion of the matter would cover a much longer period than what is usually called 'the Middle Ages': considering, for instance, such phenomena as the virtual standstill of experimental science between Archimedes and Leonardo. But the words 'mediaeval' and 'Renaissance' have their uses if they are not too strictly defined. And Miss Mahood's discussion both of the continuity and the discontinuity between the worlds of thought implied in those terms should be found thorough and convincing. Perhaps some of the conclusions she draws from her study, in that connexion, of the transition in visual art from Mannerism to Baroque, are a little over-ingenious; but the general points she makes in this interesting chapter are supported fully by the whole of the book. Her study of Donne as religious thinker shows him, even in his most sceptical phase, as keenly aware of human possibilities. His attempts to find a satisfying 'middle position' in religion, psychology and morals are seen as not merely the mentally sick man's struggles to achieve personal equilibrium but as a search for a general humanist compromise. In Milton too Miss Mahood finds this kind of quest. The Fall of man does not consist, for Milton, in the satisfaction of an illegitimate desire for knowledge, but in an act of disobedience which, because it was itself irrational, impaired the very instrument by which knowledge must be sought. To neither Donne nor Milton was 'science' the enemy: the enemy was the misuse of human powers, and to instruct men in their right use was a prime function, as moralists, of these poets.



These studies are complemented by Miss Mahood's account of Marlowe as treating a cognate theme through particular (and reasonably objective) dramatizations of *virtù*. And finally, in her interesting study of that charming couple the brothers Henry and Thomas Vaughan, we see that they too saw no contradiction between their 'scientific' thought and their spiritual perceptions: on the contrary, Henry Vaughan's poetry is one long effort to present each in terms of the other. That their 'science' was quite fantastic is irrelevant.

The wealth of the book's acute observations and interesting details (one example from many is the light thrown on Milton's use of his interest in dynamics and optics) would be enough alone to recommend it. But perhaps Miss Mahood's most notable success lies in combining a close attention to the historical and theological background with the procedure of literary criticism. This is well illustrated in her second chapter, where she makes a comparison between George Herbert and Christina Rossetti. The comparison, as she makes it, is not merely a comparison between two poets, it is a comparison between two phases of culture. Miss Mahood's lucid and sympathetic commentary brings out the strength of Herbert's work and, in contrast, the sadness, nostalgia and (to use current jargon) regressiveness of Christina Rossetti's. While agreeing fully with her lines of approach in this chapter, I cannot help feeling that this particular contrast could be brought out even, so to speak, in a historical vacuum: the passiveness, the inert elements, in the poems of Christina Rossetti which she quotes tell their own story. And Miss Mahood's critical analysis here is so forceful that when she comes to compare the respective cultural backgrounds of the two poets, the 'Caroline divines' and the Oxford Movement, the comparison seems, not only a little awkward, but rather artificial. But the intrinsic interest of the discussion is enough to justify this elaborateness. One of the major points she makes is that in Christina Rossetti's religious and secular poetry we constantly find expressed a poignant longing for 'death' (i.e. endless anaesthesia), and that this is derived from an over-strong horror of life; whereas in Herbert we find neither this despair nor the gloomy relish of a *Totentanz*, but an acceptance of death as one of the processes of life which have to be lived through. And the acceptance of this last experience of all is bound up with an acceptance of life as a whole which Christina Rossetti was unwilling, or unable, to make. And this balance and harmony in Herbert's work derives from what was balanced and harmonious in his view of man: in fact, from his religious humanism.

Enough has been said, I hope, to indicate the degree of interest which Miss Mahood's book will have for those to whom such problems of art and life are a reality. One mild cavil: it perhaps presents the search for religious humanism as too exclusively Anglican; a chapter

on Crashaw, for instance, would have been welcome. Otherwise *Poetry and Humanism* can be unequivocally recommended as a brilliant and authoritative study and in every respect a major piece of historical criticism.

W. W. ROBSON

### MONTESQUIEU

Montesquieu, *Œuvres Complètes*, Tome I (*Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* Gallimard, Paris, 1949); Montesquieu, *Un Carnet inédit: Le Spicilège*. (Flammarion, Paris, 1945.)

ONE must congratulate M. Caillois who is responsible for this admirable new edition of Montesquieu's works. Until now Montesquieu's *Pensées* were only accessible to scholars in Barckhausen's limited edition which was published in 1899-1901 under the auspices of the Bordeaux *Société des Bibliophiles de Guyenne*. They have never reached a wider public except through the inadequate selection published in 1941 by Bernard Grasset under the title of *Montesquieu's Cahiers*. Now Montesquieu's Note-Books are accessible to the student and reader alike.

Great political philosophies can alone be understood from the character of the men who created them; their intimate psychology, their antecedents, their relationship to their contemporaries, their reading, their creative powers, in short their life experience. The finished product is very often misleading. It may be judged by its influence on posterity which does not always convey its genuine meaning. There exists a myth of Montesquieu's political philosophy as there exists a myth of Marx. The myth easily distorts the intention of the original. 'Moi, je ne suis pas marxiste.'

Every interested reader can now study the *Esprit des Lois in statu nascendi*. For thirty years Montesquieu observed his contemporary world in the light of his profound and extensive historical studies. He observed his contemporaries not only in France; his travels led him to Italy, Hungary, Germany, Holland and England where he stayed for nearly two years.

The raw materials out of which he formed his great books are now before us. It is a fascinating experience to read Montesquieu's notes on England and things English and compare these with the well-known chapters of the *Esprit des Lois*. 'L'Angleterre', we read in his *Voyages* which form an integral part of this new edition, 'est à présent le plus libre pays qui soit au monde, je n'en excepte aucune république; j'appelle libre, parce

que le prince n'a le pouvoir de faire aucun tort imaginable à qui que ce soit, par la raison que son pouvoir est contrôlé et borné par un acte (une loi du Parlement); mais si la Chambre basse devenait maîtresse, son pouvoir seroit illimité et dangereux, parce qu'elle auroit en même temps la puissance exécutive; au lieu qu'à présent le pouvoir illimité est dans le parlement et le roi, et la puissance exécutive dans le roi, dont le pouvoir est borné. Il faut donc qu'un bon Anglois cherche à défendre la liberté également contre les attentats de la couronne et ceux de la chambre.' It is certainly not so much the British Government of his time which Montesquieu describes in these memorable lines—for the institution of Cabinet Government was just about to establish itself—but rather his norm of good government. Montesquieu's conception of the working machinery of the British Constitution which the *Esprit des Lois* later fully elaborated had a decisive influence on the formation of the constitution of the United States. In Europe Montesquieu's mythical picture of British Government contributed to shape the early liberalism of the nineteenth century.

The personality of a classical constitutional lawyer attracts us by his remorseless attempts of self-analysis which are so reminiscent of Montaigne's *Essais*. (All social sciences are *persongebunden*, a truth which is often so conveniently forgotten.) Montesquieu's observations on books he read, on contemporaries he met, institutions he examined, psychological, moral, religious and historical fragments which his main works never fully developed, give this volume a vitality which makes us intimately familiar with the great humanism of the first half of the eighteenth century: '*Si je savais quelque chose qui me fût utile, et qui fût préjudiciable à ma famille, je la rejetterais de mon esprit. Si je savais quelque chose utile à ma famille, et qui ne le fût pas à ma patrie, je chercherais à l'oublier. Si je savais quelque chose utile à ma patrie, et qui fût préjudiciable à l'Europe, ou bien qui fût utile à l'Europe et préjudiciable au Genre humain, je la regarderais comme un crime.*' It is this rare humanism which gives Montesquieu his unique power.

He was fundamentally a Christian political philosopher in spite of his pagan Epicurean appearance at a superficial glance. The religious fragments and reflections printed in M. Caillois' edition make this abundantly clear. I quote a few of these fragments: '*Ce qui me prouve la nécessité d'une révélation, c'est l'insuffisance de la Religion naturelle, ou la crainte et la superstition des hommes: car, si vous aviez mis aujourd'hui les hommes dans le pur état de la Religion naturelle, demain ils tomberaient dans quelque superstition première.*' Against Pascal, Montesquieu writes: '*L'argument de M. Pascal: "Vous gagnez tout à croire et ne gagnez rien à ne pas croire", très bon contre les athées. Mais il n'établit pas une religion plutôt qu'une autre.*' Perhaps the following fragment shows the most intimate touch of Montesquieu's style and thought: '*Admirable idée des Chinois, qui comparent la justice de Dieu à un filet si grand que les poissons qui se pro-*

mènent croient être en liberté ; mais réellement ils sont pris. Les pécheurs croient, de même, qu'ils ne seront pas prendre de Dieu ; mais ils sont dans le filet.' So far I have only mentioned Montesquieu's *Pensées* and *Voyages* which this new edition includes. It also contains *Les Lettres persanes* and Montesquieu's shorter literary and scientific works. (The *Esprit des Lois* and *La Grandeur et la Décadence des Romains* will follow in the second volume.)

M. Caillois' introduction is concise and extremely suggestive. He very rightly regards Montesquieu as a pioneer and classic in political sociology. A short bibliography which takes full account of British and American research on Montesquieu, and adequate notes make the volume into a first-rate text-book. If one reads this volume with M. André Masson's edition of *Le Spicilège*, Montesquieu's method of work becomes increasingly clear. He will cut news and statistics from *Gazettes* or *Journals*, he will note conversations, extracts from books—Montesquieu was a ferocious reader. 'Grâce au *Spicilège*,' writes its brilliant editor, 'on se rend mieux compte de la méthode de travail de Montesquieu. On est frappé, d'une part, de la prépondérance des sources orales et d'autre part du caractère moderne de sa documentation.'

André Gide once said a journal of Dostoievski's *Karamasov* might be more revealing than the work itself. We know so little about the secrets of the creative mind. I think Gide's remark would also apply to a great philosophical book, e.g. Hegel's *Logic*, and it certainly applies to Montesquieu's political sociology. For it is in the present volumes where we meet his powerful searching mind never at rest.

J. P. MAYER

#### SAINTE-BEUVE

*Œuvre Critique*. Edited by M. Leroy. (*Bibliothèque de la Pléiade*, Gallimard, Paris, 1949.)

IN recent years a new appreciation of Sainte-Beuve has gained ground. Owing to M. Bonnerot's admirable edition of Sainte-Beuve's *Correspondence* and above all as a result of M. Leroy's penetrating books, *La Pensée de Sainte-Beuve* (1940), *La Politique de Sainte-Beuve* (1941) and *Vie de Sainte-Beuve* (1947), it is now possible to differentiate between the apparent 'patron saint' of the critics—as such he has recently been acclaimed—and Sainte-Beuve's real significance as one of the most profound and subtle minds of the nineteenth century, a true contemporary

of Tocqueville, Proudhon, Donoso Cortés, Kierkegaard, Burckhardt, or Lord Acton.

The sixty volumes he has left us, the *Causeries du Lundi*, the *Nouveaux Lundis*, his formidable *Port-Royal*, perhaps the greatest historical work the last century has seen, his *Chateaubriand*, his *Proudhon*, etc., are an inexhaustible fount of indirect interpretation of the human world as it manifests itself in all spheres of culture. His writings serve Sainte-Beuve as a pretext for the formation and crystallization of his own ideas.

The most recent addition to 'Beuviste' literature is a new edition of his *Œuvre Critique*, most promisingly heralded by a first volume in Gallimard's admirable series, *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade*. The volume is edited by M. Leroy and contains the *Premiers Lundis*, which were first posthumously edited by Sainte-Beuve's secretary, M. Troubat. Concise essays on the life and on the critical work of Sainte-Beuve, together with notes from the pen of M. Leroy, enable us to follow the beginnings of Sainte-Beuve's great literary career (the volume contains also the first parts of the *Portraits Littéraires*). M. Leroy has very wisely chosen a different textual arrangement from M. Troubat's edition, for many years now out of print. Moreover, he has added as an Appendix various earlier essays of Sainte-Beuve which he wrote at the age of eighteen as a student of the Collège Royal de Bourbon.

Born in 1804 in Boulogne-sur-Mer, Sainte-Beuve's origins had their roots in the French *classe moyenne*. From his father, who died before his birth, he has inherited a taste for literature. 'Ma curiosité,' he writes in an autobiographical sketch, 'mon désir de tout voir, de tout regarder de près, mon extrême plaisir à trouver le vrai relatif de chaque chose et de chaque organisation m'entraînaient à cette série d'expériences qui n'ont été pour moi qu'un long cours de *physiologie morale*' (my italics).

This long course in 'moral physiology' is probably the link which binds the many volumes, the result of his arduous life work, together. Social intercourse with his friends, two travelling professorships at Lausanne and Brussels where he lectured on Port Royal and Chateaubriand, subjects which were to be formed later into two great works; a romantic love affair with Victor Hugo's wife, an honorary librarianship at the Bibliothèque Mazarine; senator under Louis Napoléon—these are the exterior stages of a life which otherwise was the life of a scholar, of a passionate worker. Like Proudhon and Péguy he hardly ever leaves France. Paris, as in the age of Thomas Aquinas, is still the spiritual centre of the world. The problems of French life and culture are still the most advanced experiments in human self-interpretation. Sainte-Beuve need not travel around the world; the world and its problems are reflected in his books, in his searching mind.

Yet this mind is full of drama and tension. Sainte-Beuve is not a

detached, impassive historian. He participates in the historic dynamic of his time. The course in moral physiology demanded ultimately decision and valuation.

The reader of his *Cahiers*, which Jules Troubat has so faithfully edited after his death, will realize how in a period of social crisis Sainte-Beuve's mind is meeting the challenge. He is a true contemporary of Proudhon and Alexis de Tocqueville. 'Nous allons tomber,' Sainte-Beuve writes in 1848, 'dans une grossièreté immense: le peu qui nous restait de la *Princesse de Clèves* (et Dieu sait qu'il ne nous en restait pas grand' chose) va s'abîmer pour jamais et s'abolir.' The revolution threatens the norms and standards of culture:

'Rien de plus prompt à baisser que la civilisation dans des crises comme celle-ci. On perd en trois semaines les résultats de plusieurs siècles. La civilisation, la *vie* est une chose apprise et inventée, qu'on le sache bien . . .

'Les hommes après quelques années de paix oublient trop cette vérité; ils arrivent à croire que la *culture* est chose innée, qu'elle est la même chose que la nature. La sauvagerie est toujours là à deux pas et, dès qu'on lâche pied, elle recommence.' After a Second World War, we know only too well how well justified and profound this observation was. Man as a historic being is always nearer the abyss than he knows.

Sainte-Beuve, like Tocqueville in his *Souvenirs*, fully appreciates the singular historic significance of the revolution of 1848. It is a phase in one long revolutionary process: 'Ce n'est pas ici une révolution politique, mais un avènement de classe. La classe aristocratique et cléricale avait été renversée par la classe bourgeoise, celle-ci à son tour a fait son temps, et la voilà renversée par la classe ouvrière. Ce sont là nos maîtres du jour et de l'avenir. Car il y a toujours de maîtres.' The last short sentence is characteristic of Sainte-Beuve's pointed and precise style and thought. He was too much of a historian, fully in possession of two thousand years of history of western civilization, to be deceived by social utopias. While he has no illusion about the revolutionary events of the 1848 period, he reflects on the lesson of its social trends for the future: 'Cette révolution est comme la société moderne, toute positive; rien de national, ou peu de chose; pas d'enthousiasme. La satisfaction des intérêts avant tout. Le premier soin au lendemain de la victoire est pour une question de salaire et de gros sous. C'est respectable, mais c'est triste.'

One should perhaps add to this observation the following one: 'Nous sommes dans la chaudière d'Éson. La liberté, la propriété, le mariage même, tels que nous sommes accoutumés à les entendre, ne sont dans doute pas des formes définitives de la société, et si ces formes sont destinées à subir quelque transformation profonde, ce ne peut être que par une suite de secousses du genre de celles auxquelles nous



assistons. *Nous ne sommes qu'au commencement.*' (My italics.) Here, too, it is evident to the reader of Tocqueville's correspondence and *Souvenirs* to what extent both men were near to each other.

Sainte-Beuve was so intensely aware of the relativity and subtlety of social structures and men's relation to them that he rejected political theories which seemed to him largely based on unwarranted generalizations.

The realm of thought and art are in Sainte-Beuve's philosophy perennial, they represent: *die Ruhe in der Erscheinungen Flucht*. In contrast, the realm of politics is variable and is defined by the historic moment. Yet Sainte-Beuve lives in both spheres, though he derives his measure and norm from the former, his scepticism, if not pessimism, from the latter.

There is a note in the *Cahiers* which may serve as an illustration of this twofold concern of Sainte-Beuve's thought: 'Mars 1848. J'ai en moi plusieurs sentiments contradictoires et comme des hommes divers qui se combattent. Je suis curieux, et le spectacle des choses humaines m'amuse; je suis artiste, et les choses lestement faites, galamment troussées me séduisent . . . Je suis au fond Girondin et républicain par instinct; j'ai l'humeur populaire, et à chaque émotion publique le vieux levain se remue en moi. Mais j'ai 44 ans; je suis délicat de santé, de nerfs, raffiné en goûts littéraires et en mœurs sociales; je suis assis depuis des années, et mes habitudes sont en contradiction avec mes instincts.' These sentences show the same power of introspection which we find in Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, or Pascal, who were Sainte-Beuve's great teachers. These sentences provide us also with the key to an understanding of what he termed his 'humeur populaire' which he shared with Michelet and Proudhon. Like them he always was and remained 'un homme du peuple'.

His *ralliement* towards Louis Napoléon's plebiscitary dictatorship, for which he has been blamed by many of his contemporaries and also by his biographers, has its roots in his sceptical view of politicians and political theories. Profoundly influenced by Saint-Simon, he shares with his master the view that political and social systems cannot be invented. 'On ne crée point un système d'organisation sociale,' writes Saint-Simon in his *Physiologie Sociale*, 'on aperçoit le nouvel enchaînement d'idées ou d'intérêts qui s'est formé, on le montre, voilà tout. Un système social est un fait, ou il n'est rien.' We owe it to Maxime Leroy, who in *La Politique de Sainte-Beuve* has analysed the complex and intimate relation of Sainte-Beuve's political thought to Saint-Simonism. This book not only explains Sainte-Beuve's 'empirisme organisateur', but also enables the student to see his *ralliement* towards Napoléon III in the proper historic perspective.

The intimate connexion between the theory of 'empirisme organisateur' and Sainte-Beuve's *ralliement* towards the Second Empire is

obvious. It must also be remembered that the course of the Revolution of 1848 had disillusioned Sainte-Beuve's 'liberalism'. 'Mais comprenez-moi bien,' he writes, 'je ne suis pas bonapartiste; ce n'est point par fétichisme, ni enthousiasme que je me range à eux, c'est par raison; il est l'élu du suffrage universel; et nous avons besoin d'un gouvernement fort et stable.' Yet he took his stand against Louis Napoléon when he felt called upon to defend Renan or the freedom of the press.

The Second Empire failed to realize what Sainte-Beuve had expected from it. In 1869—the year of his death—he summed up his attitude towards the imperial régime thus: 'Je suis pour la gauche de l'Empire.' It was his abhorrence of vague and Utopian political theories and theorists, his fundamental pessimism, an attitude which he shared with his contemporary Jacob Burckhardt, which made Sainte-Beuve incline towards ralliement. 'Lorsque l'on a atteint quarante ans,' we read in the *Causeries du Lundi*, 'et qu'on n'est pas absolument dépourvu de jugement, on ne croit pas plus à l'empire de l'expérience qu'à celui de la raison: leurs instructions sont perdues pour les gouvernements comme pour les peuples; et l'on est heureux de compter cent hommes sur une génération à qui les vicissitudes humaines apprennent quelque chose'. This political pessimism has its roots in his basic conception of human nature. 'Toutes mes idées politiques,' explain the *Cahiers*, 'ont changé du jour où j'ai été convaincu de ce résultat d'observation morale: "Les hommes sont une assez méchante et plate espèce: il n'y a de bons que quelques-uns, et ceux-là il faut sans cesse les extraire et les entretenir par des soins continus, sans quoi ils détériorent".'

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Sainte-Beuve's moral and political pessimism led him into a profound conflict with his 'humour populaire'. He was himself aware of this fundamental contradiction within his nature: a contradiction between his habits and instincts. And it is perhaps this unsolved conflict which prevented him from seeing that the affirmation of moral principles may and probably must go together with exact empirical analysis. Of his contemporaries no other figure represents the synthesis between moral principles and exact interpretation of social realities more adequately than Alexis de Tocqueville, who for Sainte-Beuve belonged to the 'liberal doctrinaires', from whom he remained aloof. Sainte-Beuve overlooked the fact that Tocqueville whose powers of self-analysis were considerable—he, too, was trained by Montaigne and Pascal—wished to be regarded as a 'liberal of a new kind'. Indeed for Tocqueville no compromise with Louis Napoléon was possible. Art, Thought and Politics are fundamentally inseparable. Politics removed from principles must ultimately lead to a denial of those norms and standards without which our civilization would decay and finally disappear.

J. P. MAYER

## ART HISTORY

*The Sequence of Mediaeval English Art.* By Walter Oakeshott. (Faber and Faber. 35s.)

THE development of the study of art history in England was deeply effected fifteen years ago by the immigration of German and Austrian art historians. Partly this may be attributed to the personal influence of two great scholars, Dr. Saxl in London and Dr. Pächt at Oxford, partly to the fact that art history had not yet established itself in the faculty systems of the English universities and only represented a single tendency in the administration of the great museums, for in consequence its traditions were still fluid. The very specialized scholarship of Mr. Oakeshott suggests how completely the new continental influences have been naturalized. His *Sequence of Mediaeval English Art* will only add to the international reputation that he gained among his fellow specialists by his *Artists of the Winchester Bible*.

It is intended as a general survey of English Painting from the seventh to the fifteenth century. But the emphasis is primarily upon the developments in manuscript illuminations—among the fifty-six plates over fifty are reproductions from illuminated MSS. Many of the most characteristic achievements that have survived from mediaeval English painting are left undiscussed in the text; the wall paintings at South Newington or the Maidstone Annunciation or the glass in All Saints, North Street, or the animal drawings in the Pepysian MS. at Magdalene College, Cambridge. This is perhaps the chief criticism of Mr. Oakeshott's survey; it is ultimately only a criticism of his title. It could have been best described clumsily as the sequence of manuscript illuminations from the *Book of Durrow* to the *Book of Hours* of the Duchess of Warwick, studied in relation to other forms of English art.

The attempted correlation between manuscript illumination and other art forms gives Mr. Oakeshott's work a special value. Thus the argument for the Northumbrian origin of the *Book of Durrow* is supported by the parallelisms between its animal ornamentation and that on the sword pommel from Crundale Down and on the belt buckle and gold clasp found at Sutton Hoo in 1938. The forty-two pages of introductory survey are marked throughout by the qualities that have come to be expected from its author, exact accuracy in minute detail, complete objectivity and a very sensitive artistic perception. The ten pages that follow are devoted to the description of the plates. The survey will have prepared the reader for the fact that only three of the notes are at all inadequate; the few lines devoted to the Chichester Roundel make no reference to the tangled problems that surround it; the short note on the Eton wall paintings does not refer to the possibility of their Flemish

origin, the Wilton diptych is stated baldly to be late fourteenth century. It is of course possible that the diptych represents the court art of Richard II, but it is also possible that it is an early fifteenth-century cult image of the murdered king commissioned by some family of the Mortimer affinity. Yet here again, taken as a whole, the notes are marked by that precise combination of minute accuracy and concision and perception which forms the only possible basis for the future development of English art history. The eighty-seven illustrations are admirably chosen and reproduced and the accuracy of the sixteen that are in colour represent a new stage in the development of colour process.

GERVASE MATHEW

### ERASMUS, TYNDALE AND MORE

*Erasmus, Tyndale and More.* By W. E. Campbell. (Eyre & Spottiswoode. 15s.)

WE preface this short notice of Mr. Campbell's book on Erasmus, Tyndale and More with two bibliographical observations. The first is to congratulate the designer of its Cambridge blue dust-cover on its lettering and distinctiveness, and particularly on his adaptation of the portrait of Erasmus from the famous Longford Castle Holbein of 1523. He has cut out, as it were, the face and head from the Wiltshire painting and secured a medallion portrait that is not in profile: attention has thus been focused on the best likeness of Erasmus extant. One notes the unobtrusiveness of the white lettering of the caption, *Erasmus*, curved to conform to the medallion.

The second observation is that the book has no Chapter I, its place being taken by an *Introduction* in which the author is free to take his readers into his confidence and to relate how at Downside in 1896 a sermon by Abbot Gasquet and a characteristic encounter subsequently with the Headmaster, Dom Leander Ramsay, made him a confirmed 'philomorus'. From the *Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII* he secured 'a sound chronological back-bone for the whole epoch' of the Reformation period, and, what for his own purposes was even more decisive, he became the possessor of the *English Works of Sir Thomas More*, the famous folio volume edited by More's nephew, William Rastell, and dedicated to Queen Mary in 1557. At this point it is enough to say that in or about 1926, when the present writer first met Mr. Campbell, Messrs. Eyre & Spottiswoode had undertaken to republish this great

folio of 1458 pages in a new folio edition, reproducing in facsimile the 1557 black-letter text with collations, annotations and a modernized version; the whole under Mr. Campbell's editorship. Of this new edition the first two volumes had appeared by 1931, and it is gratifying to find that Mr. Campbell writes hopefully of plans for the next two volumes (p. 210). Scholars in America, on the Continent and at home are anxious that the work should proceed. Meanwhile it is to this hiatus in publication that Mr. Campbell's book on *Erasmus, Tyndale and More* is due; for, as he tells us in the *Introduction*, the accidents and vicissitudes of the war period having made progress impossible he began the present work as an act of prudence to register the results of many years of study. Its plan and pattern he owed to a favourite book, Frederick Seebohm's *The Oxford Reformers of 1498: A History of the Fellow-Work of John Colet, Erasmus, and Thomas More*. As this English historical classic, however, ends in 1519 with Colet's death, Mr. Campbell, while covering the same period has included Tyndale, and carried on to 1536, the year of Tyndale's death and that of Erasmus. On 6 July, 1535, More had been beheaded; 'and so,' Mr. Campbell writes at the end of his book, 'within this short space of fifteen months died these three outstanding figures of the sixteenth century, so linked together in life, yet so different in disposition, in character and achievement, summing up in themselves the clashing convictions and events of that stormy Tudor period in which the masterful personality of Henry VIII played so determining a part.'

So much for the antecedents of Mr. Campbell's monograph as they are revealed in his *Introduction*. This, however, also contains a very able study of John Colet which gives the reader great confidence in Mr. Campbell's flair for what is excellent in his authorities. He is in the Tudor and literary sense of the word a collector, or as we say now, a compiler. His footnotes are at all times invaluable. Thus when he speaks of Erasmus first meeting Colet at Oxford, where the future Dean was lecturing on the Epistles of St. Paul, he has a reference to J. W. Atkins' recent description of the lectures as 'breaking new ground in biblical exposition by supplying the historical and local background and setting an example which Erasmus was to follow in his *Novum Instrumentum*' (p. 23). Similarly he cites Cardinal Gasquet's description of Colet's Convocation sermon (February 1511-12) as 'perhaps the most valuable contemporary account of the Church in England' (p. 25); and then, having given us the Cardinal's own summary of the sermon he adds a footnote from Colet's biographer, Lupton, praising Gasquet's 'great candour, as well as mastery of his subject'. In a word, before we have left the *Introduction* we have learned to rely on Mr. Campbell as a very well-informed guide.

These things, however, are matters of detail, evidence of con-



scientious scholarship. It is his constructive skill, his ability to control and bring into a single focus the life, work and influence of three great historical figures; it is in this structural ingenuity that his success is most striking. The fact is that he has shown himself to be more than a historiographer; he is a creative writer. Yet the secret of his success is not merely one of organizing seemingly intractable contradictions. He has a gift that is not often found in writers on the early Tudor period, the gift of sympathetic appreciation. He feels for Tyndale, 'this silent being of homely appearance, buttoned up within himself', who describes himself as 'evil favoured in this world and without grace in the sight of men' . . . 'speechless and rude, dull and slow-witted' who yet—in the words of R. W. Chambers—'has for four hundred years exercised a supreme influence upon English prose'. It is in this spirit of sympathy that Campbell introduces Tyndale to many readers in a new light; and indeed Erasmus too. 'Perhaps an opinion may be permitted,' he writes, 'that just as the earlier troubles of Erasmus came from a "forced vocation" to the monastic life, so those of Tyndale's later years may have arisen from a "missed vocation" to the contemplative life . . . like that of St. Jerome who retired from Rome to Bethlehem, and there devoted himself for the remainder of his days to the spiritual direction of others, and to the translation of the Scriptures into the Latin version known as the Vulgate.' Mr. Campbell's closing words emphasize the loneliness of Tyndale. 'Throughout life he was a lonely soul, and, in his later years, Protestantism itself personified'. Erasmus, on the other hand, he sees as one anchored through life to the Catholic faith and devoted to the cause of sound learning, who wandered over Europe from the Netherlands to Paris, and from Paris to London, and from London to Florence and to Rome, and then back to England again where at Cambridge he began, and almost completed, his *Novum Instrumentum* and his great edition of St. Jerome; the friend of St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More.

Finally it would be misleading to close this appreciation of Mr. Campbell's work without a reference to what to many readers will be its most valuable provision. I refer to the great body of illustrative extracts that with great aptness he has selected from the writings not only of More but also of Tyndale and, in translation, of Erasmus. To have this wealth of good reading made accessible in a sympathetic setting is a priceless benefaction for which many readers young as well as old will be grateful.

Such, then, is Mr. Campbell's continuation of Seebohm's *Oxford Reformers*; and as the one could have been written by none but Seebohm, whose hero was Colet, so the other could have been written only by Campbell whose Patron is St. Thomas More.

A. W. REED



## CHARLES DE FOUCAULD

*Desert Calling. The Story of Charles de Foucauld.* By Anne Fremantle. (Hollis and Carter. 15s.)

THERE can be few prettier ironies of history than the fact that during a generation when the Third Republic was waging war on the Church in France and expelling the Orders, some of the greatest figures in French Catholicism were dedicating their lives to winning and consolidating the vast North African territory for the Christian tradition which had made the ancient greatness of France. Cardinal Lavignerie, Lyautey, Mgr. Guérin, Laperrine, Charles de Foucauld wrote the beginnings of an epic which is only beginning to be widely known in France. They achieved what they did very largely behind the backs of the politicians and thanks to the latter's ignorance of the importance of Africa; and it is only since the politicians have started to take a meddlesome, self-interested part in the conduct of the African Empire that there seems to be a real threat to the solid and far-seeing achievements of the great pro-Consuls.

Nothing in the early life of the Vicomte Charles de Foucauld indicated the extraordinary career for which he was destined. He was orphaned early in life, which may have contributed to his later bent towards spiritual solitude. His school career was undistinguished. His record as a Cavalry cadet was mediocre. As a young officer he was undisciplined, arrogant and more than a little of a bounder. He maintained his mistress in the garrison town, which was not unusual; he went out of his way to be rude to his commanding officer, for example, by organizing sumptuous entertainments which attracted most of the regimental officers in competition with a party run by the C.O.—and then rubbed home the lesson by hiring all the cabs in town to drive past the C.O.'s party, empty, but refusing hires from the fuming guests.

When the regiment was posted to Africa, de Foucauld showed himself an excellent troop officer; but his social conduct was as bad as ever. He brought his mistress to Africa and authorized her to use his title; and rather than maintain a discreet silence about her presence he preferred to resign his commission.

But on his return to Europe he found that the desert had stamped him for its own. He broke off his liaison and returned to study seriously the language, habits and territory of the interior of Morocco—hitherto unknown territory. In 1883, just before his twenty-fifth birthday, he set out on his first great journey. It took nearly a year, but when it was over Charles de Foucauld had mapped 2500 miles of Morocco, visited places where Europeans had never gone, and chronicled exact information which guided the whole Empire-building effort for the next fifty

years. The indolent, arrogant, luxury-loving young man had become a renowned scholar, patient, exact and ascetic. But he was not yet reconverted to the Faith of his family and his childhood.

He became engaged and then broke off the match after another year, during which he had again visited Africa. Shortly after this he met the priest, l'Abbé Huvelin, *curé* of Saint-Augustin, who led him back to the Church. The spiritual odyssey of de Foucauld had begun. After four retreats with various Orders, he obtained the permission of the Abbé to enter the Trappist novitiate. But the community life did not meet his deep hunger for the life of a hermit. He went to Jerusalem, where he spent a very happy period as a lay-brother serving a community of nuns. But all this time he was resisting the suggestion of his spiritual director that he should take Orders. Finally the step was taken and Charles was ready for the last, long period of his apostolate of the Sahara. From 1901 till 1914, when he was murdered, he laboured amid the Touaregs and the French troops. He did not make a single convert among the natives, though he was the greatest single influence in bringing them to accept some part of European civilization; and he was certainly the greatest pacific influence in advancing and consolidating French sway in North Africa. He dreamed of founding an Order; and he never had a follower in his own lifetime, nor for twenty years after his death. He looked for no temporal fame; yet he established a legend as the lexicographer, translator and compiler of the literature of the Touaregs.

The extraordinary destiny which has led to Charles de Foucauld's canonization being sought by an Order to which he never belonged (the White Fathers) is told by Miss Fremantle with a wealth of detail not hitherto available in English. The value of her narrative is increased by her familiarity with the scenes in which Charles spent his life. Some of the descriptive passages are extremely fine.

But it must be added that Miss Fremantle contrives to be as irritating as possible over a long narrative of over 300 pages. It may be true—and I think it is—that she has chosen a subject requiring insight and experience outside her range, as one complaining reader suggested. There are minor awkwardnesses in the translations from French which are avoidable but not unduly annoying. What is tedious is the intrusion of various irrelevant themes which one is finding in almost every American writer on every subject lately—the unscholarly and irritating references to various Oriental mysticisms (which would be forgivable if they illustrated anything; but they merely obtrude because Americans seem to have this topic on the brain); other clichés of psychology which can almost be foretold as soon as one opens an American book nowadays: I thought I was going to escape at least the schoolboy stuff about the 'impulse to return to the womb'—but it duly made its appearance on the second-last page.

That is bad enough, but Miss Fremantle has also acquired the strained manner of writing which makes so much American prose a torture to read. Charles is described as a 'once-tangential officer' when the meaning is that he was undisciplined; Marie de Bondy is described as 'the landscape of his affective life'—which means she was his most intimate confidante. There are paragraphs, presumably intended to illustrate and explain the mental and spiritual processes of Charles, which are simply incomprehensible. One is forced to conclude that Miss Fremantle has no idea what to say on these occasions and is taking refuge in verbalism. It would be poor writing on any subject and it is thoroughly inadequate treatment for a man who may be recognized as a Saint. It is good to see that there is a reaction against this kind of hagiography; and Miss Fremantle can consider herself fortunate that she has not come in for such rough handling as M. van der Meersch has received in France for his recent life of Ste. Thérèse of Lisieux.

I also found her treatment of the episode of Charles' broken engagement rather silly. Considering that his family had already taken legal action to ensure that his business affairs should be supervised by a *conseil judiciaire*, it is not surprising that they should have made his proposed marriage a matter for their very serious interest, even if they did help to put an end to the scheme. It is a small point in the book; but it seems to me to reflect Miss Fremantle's inability to understand a tradition of life which is none the less valid and real for being entirely different from the twentieth-century outlook of Britain and more especially America. When that vital attempt at sympathy is lacking to such a degree that the biographer does not seem to perceive the necessity of even making it, prudence would suggest that some other subject should have been chosen.

FRANK MACMILLAN

### ITALIAN REVIEWS

APART from the publications of the Vatican, the philosophical journal of the Catholic University of Milan and a few specialized reviews such as the *Rivista Storica* of Naples, most Italian reviews of a serious kind tend to cover philosophical problems, aesthetics and literature and to give a very large space to politics as well. Until the first number of *Littérature Moderne* appeared in July, there existed in Italy only one purely literary review of more than local significance, *La Fiera Letteraria*. Perhaps one of the reasons for this diversity of content is that there exists no single

centre of intellectual life in Italy (there are at least four, Rome, Milan, Naples, and Florence) and therefore every review thinks itself bound to present a fairly general picture of intellectual affairs. Moreover the public which reads serious books or reviews is small. An author such as Moravia or Brancati counts the sale of 10,000 copies of a novel as a considerable and rare financial success. An equivalent success in France by an author of a similar kind would mean a sale of at least 50,000 copies. A small reading public makes specialization unpractical.

Other than a few academic publications, only two widely known reviews have survived Fascism and war. These are *La Critica*, which since 1903 has published the works of Croce, and *La Civiltà Cattolica*, which first appeared in 1849 and which is the mouthpiece of the Society of Jesus. This latter review fulfils a double purpose: publishing articles of direct use to the clergy and presenting a general picture of Catholic thought. Its current issue contains an article called 'The Spectre of Number and the Malthusian Crusade', which points out the absurdity of many arguments used to advocate birth control. Many rather excitable scientists have spoken of an approaching world food shortage as though it were a knife already at the throat of the human race. No account is taken by these people of the immense possibilities of an increased food supply through intensive peasant agriculture nor, in spite of great play with arithmetical figures of population and acreages, with the real potentialities of science in increasing food supply. *Civiltà Cattolica* has also a long review of 'the God That Failed' attacking the oft repeated cliché, used by Mr. R. H. S. Crossman in his introduction, that Catholicism and Communism make an essentially similar appeal to certain kinds of mind. Catholic reviews of the type of *La Vie Intellectuelle* or *Idées et Forces* do not exist in Italy. On the other hand the left wing of the Christian Democratic party possess an admirable review published in Rome called *Cronaca Sociale*. This review has published what even its political opponents admit to be the most accurate surveys of problems such as housing and land reform. It is not very popular in reactionary circles whether Catholic or non-Catholic but it is a very efficient ally of progressive Catholicism.

*Il Mondo* is the most successful of the new reviews, and the most unusual by French or British standards. It makes no bid for a wide popularity though it publishes photographs, very often of life and events in London, Paris or New York, which are every bit as telling as those of *Picture Post*. *Il Mondo* publishes articles by Benedetto Croce as well as by young authors and without being *avant-garde* mirrors all tendencies in modern literature. Politically *Il Mondo* favours neither Christian Democracy nor its Right-wing alternatives. Its principal political collaborators are drawn from the Liberal and Action parties, and include Panfilo Gentile and Mario Ferrara. A recent political article calls for

more vigorous action against the Communist party and, in the light of Togliatti's recent incitement to sedition, advocates measures of a military kind to secure the public services and to suppress espionage.

*Il Ponte* published in Florence and edited by Piero Calamandrei, and with which Salvemini, who is returning to Florence to fill the Chair of History, is associated, represents Left-wing opinion. It reflects the attitude particularly of certain Florentine writers who, neither accepting Communism nor the point of view of the Nenni Socialists, are against the Atlantic Pact. It is a sign of the times that when attempting to describe the general atmosphere of an intellectual review one is obliged to think in political terms.

*Belfagor* published in Milan is in its fifth year. It has a distinguished list of contributors, among whom are Paolo Alleati and Attilio Momigliano, who has recently finished an important study of Poliziano. Its general climate is that of the Left.

There are fewer reviews today devoted to the Fine Arts than before the war. *Botteghe Oscure*, edited by the Duchess of Sermoneta, is largely concerned with Art history. Its title has a curious sound to Roman ears since Via Botteghe Oscure is the headquarters of the Italian Communist party. An important review which appeared this year is *Commentari*, published by Felice Le Monnier in Florence. The first number contained a long study of Piero Uccello and an article by Bernard Berenson on Alberto Sani, a sculptor of peasant origin whose work is little known outside Italy. Sani is completely uninterested by contemporary or indeed by classical art, nor has he ever been to an art school. Yet his work, according to Berenson, shows an astonishing similarity in technique and conception with late classical sculpture of the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. A propos of Sani's work, Berenson makes an analysis of the nature of inspiration and imitation in the Fine Arts and he calls Sani an artist outside his time.

*La Critica* published by Laterza at Bari since 1903 is with the exception of *La Civiltà Cattolica* the oldest Italian review. Throughout the Fascist period Croce remained a vigorous and outspoken enemy of the regime. Perhaps *Critica* was the only review in Italy or Germany that dictatorship did not dare to suppress. Since 1945 it has appeared under the title *Quaderni della Critica* and has published sixteen issues. Since the death of the Rector of Naples, Adolfo Omodeo, the output of *Quaderni* has been dominated even more markedly than before by Croce. The last number shows Croce's enormous range of interests and indefatigable creative activity. Here are a number of long studies of the philosophy of history, the discovery of a sixteenth-century Calabria poet, essays on poems by Mallarmé, Pietro Bembo, Goethe and Carducci, and notes on Italian politics in the days of Giolitti.

E. W. ASHCROFT



## FRENCH AND GERMAN REVIEWS

NEVER has there been a time when the struggle of the Church against the world of darkness and evil was more obvious, and we cannot doubt the readiness of the faithful to participate in that struggle. Communism has unmasked itself: in our opposition to that evil force we have the support of the whole Western world and a widespread appreciation of the Church's attitude to militant atheism; through all the ordinary channels, therefore, we continue to associate with those who share our aims in this respect and to insist on certain rights in education and other matters which are indispensable to the attainment of those same agreed aims. We know, too, that the Holy Spirit is still with His Church and that we have also at our disposal all the resources of holiness: besides leaders and organizers, we have saints. But the difficulty is that the saints are in odd places and fit in even less with the complacent observance of the ordinary Catholic than ever they did in the past. Behind the external struggle there is a crisis within the Church and it seems as if continental Catholics are more aware of it than we are; certainly they are more articulate.<sup>1</sup>

Ida Goerres is still writing 'Letters on the Church',<sup>2</sup> a volume of which is to be published in the autumn. In the June *Frankfurter Hefte* she writes of the visible aspect of the Church, showing at once the reason why the most friendly observer is scandalized by it and what it should really mean for the faithful themselves. Catholicism is a *whole*, but it is only seen in parts: even the most necessary of religious objects and furnishings may appear to the willing seeker far removed from what should be the most spiritual, the most intimate and secret reality in his life. Inevitably, too, the parts take on something of the imperfections of surrounding things; only beyond death's frontiers can religion be pure—in fact, there, is nothing but religion and the bond is God Himself. Here we have to put up with rubbishy holy pictures, the smell of tobacco, perfume and eucalyptus from our neighbours at a Holy Hour; more disturbing is a pharisaical insistence on and contentedness with forms—a first Communion, for instance, which becomes an act of state.

Robert Scherer in the July *Wort und Wahrheit* asks if the supposed achievements of the Catholic movements of the past half century—Catholic Action, Liturgical Apostolate, and the rest—are as great as they might have been. They have been handicapped and are still handicapped by two main tendencies, objectivism and subjectivism. Objecti-

<sup>1</sup> A splendid exception was Dr. Bernard Grimley on 'Our Schools—Are We Satisfied with Them?' in *The Clergy Review*, April 1950.

<sup>2</sup> The first of these, which roused considerable controversy on its first appearance in Germany, was published in *THE DUBLIN REVIEW*, Winter 1949.



vism is not the healthy realism of the Middle Ages, but has much more in common with rationalism: it reduces the manifold of life, the mystery of the supernatural, to a series of *things*; theology becomes a science on the level of the profane sciences, concerned with a special kind of object, not rooted in the sacramental life of the Church. The Church itself becomes nothing more than a teaching authority and an over-sharp distinction is drawn between clergy and laity, a mentality being thus created that is manifestly opposed to a really fruitful lay-apostolate under the direction of the hierarchy. But there is also the tendency to judge and measure everything from the standpoint of the individual, a subjectivism which is not necessarily opposed to objectivism. Catholicism becomes a sect, a group of individuals distinguished from other groups in that they are in the right and for that very reason incapable of a fruitful contact with contemporaries who hold a different view. This is a pessimistic outlook, and the author does not pretend to speak of conditions outside Germany; nevertheless there is much in his strictures that applies far beyond these self-imposed limits.

To England belongs the credit of producing an author who has done more than most to make European Catholics question their whole outlook on faith and holiness. Until recently it was scarcely possible to pick up at any rate a German Catholic review without an article devoted to Graham Greene; now he is generally accepted as having introduced a new type of sanctity to the world: his whisky-priest is compared, not with characters of fiction, but with saints who actually lived in the past. The recognition of the unorthodox saint of fiction has also led to a new appreciation of holiness in paths hitherto unnoticed even by those who knew that the way to heaven was hard. In a very outspoken article in the July *Études* Louis Beirnaert speaks of two classes of saints: the psychologically healthy described with gusto by the conventional hagiographers and those 'who bear an insupportable weight of determinisms . . . who will never charm the birds or caress the wolf of Gubbio; those who fall and will fall again; those who will weep to the end, not because they have knocked too loudly at a door, but because they have committed again this sin—sordid, unmentionable'. But St. Teresa and St. Ignatius with their fine balance are nearer to the wayward whisky-priest than to the healthy conformist 'who has never wavered at the roots of his being, never stammered before God'. They belong to the same world: 'a world where the only sadness is to feel oneself always so unworthy of God, and the sole joy to be loved by Him and give love for love'.

Karl Pflieger describes in the May *Wort und Wahrheit* the character of one of the strangest of the saints of the outlying ways: the unbaptized Simone Weil. Life for her was as absurd and empty as Sartre claims it to be, but that was precisely why God had to fill it and not be

excluded from it; evil consisted in the impossibility of making anything in this world into an end for its own sake and therefore evil was nothing other than the form which God's unbounded mercy took on here. 'In Christianity there is contained an idea of earthly reality that is not at all rosy. In practical life we just cannot bear it and we thrust it into the depths of our consciousness. Simone Weil placed it in the forefront of her consciousness.' Twisted, unorthodox, at times perhaps untrue, these views are of one who yet sought the true God with all her heart. To quote Père Beirnaert again, she was one of those 'seized by the holiness of God at the very centre of the person, at the fine point of the soul of which the mystics speak'; for 'sanctification is an event of the spiritual order which takes place between two liberties, the one holy, the other sinful'.

A modest but real success seems to have been attained by the *Jeunesse Agricole Chrétienne*, of which the celebrations on the twentieth anniversary of its foundations have been the subject of comment in *Études*, *La Vie Spirituelle* and *La Vie Intellectuelle*. The magnificent demonstration at the Parc des Princes from 12-14 May has now been estimated by cool thinkers to have been a genuine expression of a movement at grips with its proper task and definitely in sight of its goal, however distant: *Études* calls it 'the liveliest of our youth-movements . . . containing in itself the germ of a rural civilization to which the spirit of the Gospel will not be strange'; *La Vie Intellectuelle* asks, 'Which must triumph, the life that they represent or the forms of a civilization already showing so many signs of age?'

Another gathering, the *Semaine des Catholiques Intellectuelles*, also seems to have greatly impressed observers. Alois Mertes, describing it in the *Schweizer Rundschau* of July, permits himself to compare unfavourably the German 'fighters for a Christian university' with these Frenchmen who by their faith, their researches and their teaching had reached the pinnacle of learning and had overcome the anti-Catholic, secularized atmosphere of 1920 from within the university—not through struggles for power over institutions, for teaching posts, and for budgets, but simply through their united witness as living Christians and capable specialists. The general topic was 'Humanism and Grace' and many of the papers appear in recent issues of both French and German reviews (Germany was represented by two of its most liberal-minded Catholics, Romano Guardini and Walter Dirks). Pierre Jouguelet speaking about the literature of our time (the paper appears in the June *Études*) also has to return to the subject of Graham Greene; but he pleads for a greater optimism on the part of Christian writers, shrewdly judging that 'with such works Christian pessimism reaches its limit, one cannot add to either scale of the balance'.

It is a pleasure to be able to call attention at last to the finely pro-

duced review of Christian art, *Das Münster* (bi-monthly, published in Munich), although the occasion is a recent article the title of which implies a disturbing but justifiable censure on our times: 'Art in the Age of Atheism' by Hans Sedlmayr. This atheistic age, which begins about the middle of the nineteenth century, is marked in the first place by the secularization of art—art is adapted to purely material ends, painting is either pure fantasy or it is made equivalent to photography. The functionalization of art rouses the opposition of the artists, who seek freedom in remoteness from a bleak utilitarian world: aestheticism emerges and art loses all contact with real life. This in turn is criticized by those who recall the traditional association of art with mystery and religion; but because the firm roots of a living religion are no longer there, a subjectivist, romantic movement sets in, which also constantly tends to the merely aesthetic and decorative. The pseudo-mysticism is soon overthrown by those aware of genuine mysteries, especially the mystery of evil: not an atheistic, but rather an anti-theistic attitude is characteristic of this stage—the stage of surrealism. These stages are not without parallel in the earlier history of art; other features are unique to our age: the tendency to autonomy in each of the arts, the loss of a centre and the consequent hardening, dissolution, and chaotic situation of man himself; man's image is reduced to the common level of things and the demonic element becomes ever more apparent until we end in sheer idolatry. A rebirth of the spirit, signs of which can be seen in poetry, is necessary before it can find appropriate expression in art—for before that it will have been necessary to change the face of the age.

On a similar theme, Max Picard, writing in the June *Schweizer Rundschau*, describes the atom-bomb as 'not an invention of man, but the revenge of mishandled things withdrawing from his sight'. The 'atomizing' of modern art is symptomatic of the general breakdown, a fragmentation the end of which is the atom-bomb 'tolerating nothing that is not in pieces'. Great art in the past has been concerned with fragments: a branch, for example, painted on a Chinese vase; but visible also in this branch is 'the whole tree and all Spring'. Wholeness must be restored, as Orpheus regained Eurydice, not meeting the darkness with still darker powers 'but with the bright and clear light of song'.

Space does not permit of more than a mention of other important recent articles.

Sigrid Undset's account of her conversion in the May *Études* should be read in connexion with the articles already mentioned by Ida Goerres and Robert Scherer. The two greatest obstacles to conversion are, she says, 'our unwillingness to abandon favourite fantasies' (she instances the temptation to dream of a country where two and two

need not make four) 'at the command of a teaching Church . . . and the scandal given by bad Catholics in every age, the sombre reverse side of the luminous dogma of the Communion of Saints'.

In the June *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* Père L. de Sousberghe insists on a closer investigation of the origin and meaning of the scholastic doctrine of property as of natural law. The traditional position can and should be maintained, but it is necessary to understand its complexity, to compare it with the views of other political and social philosophers and be constantly aware of the changing circumstances in which the thesis is applied.

The death of Elizabeth Langgässer on 25 July, at the early age of fifty-one, robs Germany of a leading Catholic poet and writer deeply aware of the responsibility placed upon her by the times. Her novel *Das Unauslöschliche Siegel*, by which she is likely to be best remembered, describes the life of a baptized Jew against the background of the revolutionary upheavals of the past hundred years: it is a Christian epic of the struggle between the Church and the powers of darkness as it has unfolded itself in our days. A sequel, *Die Märkische Argonautenfahrt*, is to appear in the autumn.

She was born at Alzey in the Rhineland and brought up in South Germany, finally settling in Berlin in 1932. After considerable literary success she was condemned by the Nazis to silence in 1935. Her daughter was taken to Auschwitz concentration camp and the reunion—after long uncertainty—was the occasion of one of her finest lyrics, *Frühling* 1946. At the present moment the warning at the end of *Fürchte Gott* naturally springs to mind, typical of her disciplined, whole-hearted acceptance of the stark but absorbing truth of the Christian message:

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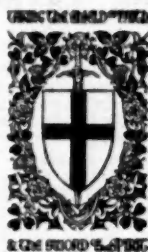
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